

THE 1488^e
AUTHENTICITY
OF THE
GOSPEL-HISTORY
JUSTIFIED;
AND THE
Truth of the CHRISTIAN Revelation
DEMONSTRATED,
From the Laws and Constitution of Human Nature.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By the late *ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL*, D.D.
Regius Professor of Divinity and Ecclesiastical History
in the University of St. Andrew's.

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БИБЛІОТЕКА
УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ

САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГА

ГОСЕР-ГІОГІЯ

ІМПЕРІАЛЬСКОЇ

БІБЛІОТЕКА

ІМПЕРІАЛЬСКОЇ АКАДЕМІІ

To His GRACE
A R C H I B A L D
DUKE of ARGYLE, &c. &c.

Hereditary Great Master of the Houshold,
LORD Justice-General of SCOTLAND,
LORD-KEEPER of the Great Seal, and
One of His MAJESTY's Most Honourable
Privy-Council,

This BOOK is
most humbly dedicated, by
His GRACE'S
most Devoted
and most Obedient
humble Servant,

The WIDOW of the AUTHOR.

To the Crows
A. R. G. H. I. B. A. T. D.
Duke of Argyle, George
Highly-esteemed Father of the High Sheriff
Lord Justice-General of Scotland
Lord-Knight of the Queen's Chapel
One of His Majesty's Most Honourable
Privy-Council

This BOOK is
now happily disposed of by
the Collector
John Bowes
Capt. John Osborne
Major-General
Sir James Stephen
Sir Wm. Widdowson of the Author.

P R E F A C E.

IN my *Inquiry into the Extent of Human Powers* with respect to matters of Religion, I have made it appear, that mankind, left to themselves, or having no information from Heaven, are not able, in the use of their natural faculties, to discover the being and perfections of God, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, the great fundamental articles of natural religion.

In that argument, I confess, I have against me, not only all our Deists, whose cause is thereby totally ruined; but a number of Christians, who do not seem to have attended to that question, in the manner wherein they might have been led to apprehend the real truth of things: Nor do I take upon me to make it good in the way of speculation; I appeal to facts: And the fact is most apparent, even in the case of the most knowing and learned Heathen Philosophers: The consequence therefore is, *Revelation is necessary*. And as a great part of the world is now possessed of the knowledge of those essential articles of Religion,

that lay beyond the reach of human discovery, this I take to be a proof, as necessary or infallible as that of the cause from the effect, that in truth *God has been pleased to make a supernatural Revelation to mankind.*

Thus far then having cleared our way, it seems only to remain, that among the many different religions that pretend to have come from Heaven, we carefully inquire, which of them has the best and fairest, or the only title to that original. And, without entering into a minute disquisition, in comparing together the several religions now subsisting in the world, every man, upon a general view, must be sensible, that before all others the Christian institution is, on many accounts, infinitely preferable, and the most likely to have come from the great Parent of mankind. So that in the following sheets, I undertake to explain the truth of the Christian Revelation in particular; and therein I hope, having clearly vindicated the Authenticity of the Gospel-History, it will appear to such of the human species as think freely, and will give themselves the trouble fairly to attend to the movements of the human mind, and as these must necessarily direct a man's actions in such particular circumstances, That *the Apostles of our Lord were intelligent sincere honest men, firm and resolute in their service, always in the sober use of their reason, and during the whole course of their ministry, under the powerful influences of Heaven;* and consequently,

quently, that *the religion of Jesus which they taught and propagated, is undoubtedly a Divine Revelation.*

Many are the books that have been written upon this argument, and unanswerable are the demonstrations that have been given of the truth and divinity of our holy religion. It is not therefore to make up the want of proof, or to supply the defects of other Writers, that I here enter into this question. But, as I do most sincerely believe, and am thoroughly persuaded, that the religion of the blessed Jesus is of the last consequence, and of infinite concern to mankind; and our Infidels are still continuing their endeavours to break the credit of this religion, and to rob the world of so inestimable a blessing; I would gladly offer my assistance in exposing the folly of those unreasonable men, and put people in mind of the mighty evidence we have in favour of Christianity; that if we are not able to convince Deists themselves, we may at least convince the world about them, of the unfair dishonourable part they are acting; and thereby prevent, in some measure, the spreading of their pernicious principles. And as every man, who, in relation to any subject, is furnished with any stock of ideas, has always his own way of ranging those ideas, or of connecting them together, by which means an argument has the advantage of being set in different lights, and may therefore, among the different

different tastes of mankind, come to be more universally relished; so I would fain hope that the light wherein I have set the following argument, may be attended with some good consequences, that if it shall make no proselytes, it will tend to confirm Christians in their belief, and serve to enable them *to give a reason of the faith that is in them.*

In my education, which, I thank God, was free and without any tincture of bigotry, I had a view to the Ministry of the Church. But before I should enter into that public character, that would intitle me to teach others the Christian religion, I judged it necessary, highly reasonable, first to satisfy myself as to the grounds upon which the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be esteemed a Divine Revelation. And here I made this plain obvious reflection: *If the Christian institution be an imposition upon the world, of necessity the first Publishers of the Gospel must have been either Impostors or Enthusiasts.* In order therefore to come at the conclusion, which reason, or a fair inquiry would lead me to, I set myself to examine into the real truth of the character of the Apostles of our Lord: And the result of that examination, which I then made in my younger years, and whereof that particular branch concerning Enthusiasm was published in the year 1730, I now presume to lay before the world; to which I have added several sections serviceable to the main argument,
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and vindicating the Apostles from some particular exceptions of later Writers, which I considered as they happened to come in my way, and as I judged them worth the regarding.

People indeed may be fond of their own method of doing, and conceit, that the best that others can do, is to imitate them: But without any bias of that nature, I think I may take upon me, in my time of life, to advise young men who apply themselves to the study of Theology, to follow the same course. Let them carefully and impartially read and study the Scriptures themselves, and some at least of those many books, especially those of the greatest reputation, that have been writ for and against the Christian Revelation: And if, after all their search, and their utmost care to be rightly informed, they are not fully satisfied as to the real truth of the Gospel of Jesus, let them, in time, direct their view to some other business of life, and not enter into that sacred character, which they most dreadfully profane, and wherein they must involve themselves in the vilest and basest hypocrisy. But as, in my apprehension, an unbiassed study of the Scriptures, and a careful attention to the proofs of our holy religion, and to the answers made to the objections of Infidels, will most certainly lead every sober and considerate man to perceive the divine original of the Christian institution: In this case, let those who mean to enter into holy

holy orders, fix their meditation, and impress their minds with a deep sense, a penetrating conviction, that the Gospel of *Jesus Christ* is undoubtedly from Heaven. And that this sense may be the deeper and the more penetrating, and withal the more lasting and durable, let them exercise their genius, and compose a defence of the Christian Revelation upon those grounds, upon which they dare venture to recommend it to the belief of mankind. This is no more but the qualifying themselves to discharge their duty commanded in the Gospel, which, knowing the ground is good upon which it is supported, approves of no blind votaries; *Be ready always*, says the Gospel of our Lord, *to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you*, 1 Pet. iii. 15. And if along with this important branch of study, they likewise carefully peruse such excellent books, as Bishop Burnet's *Pastoral Case*, I am apt to think, that when they are admitted into their public character, they are in the way of becoming public blessings to mankind, and of giving the world a sensible demonstration, that Infidels are enemies to goodness, in opposing a religion whose Ministers practise and teach *that wisdom that is from above*, a Divine Philosophy that purifies the human mind; that inspires us with the love of God, and the love of our neighbour, with every kind and social affection; that awakens all our powers, and enables us to
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rise above this world in the pursuit of a glorious immortality. This advice I presume to give to our young men, who are aiming at the character of the public teachers of the religion of *Jesus*, and upon whose behaviour the credit of religion, among the bulk of our species, greatly depends: And as I here take my last farewell of the Public, let them look upon this advice, as the last advice of a dying friend, who highly values the sacred office, as it may be improved, which, in numberless instances, I am confident it is, to the noblest purposes; and whose hearty good wishes for peace and happiness, not restrained to sect or party, but widely diffused, comprehend all mankind. I have only to add; as our Students in Divinity will find it a very delightful and improving entertainment to peruse the writings of the Heathen; so not only in the following Treatise, but in those others I have published, they may see the use to be made of those Writings to the advantage of natural and revealed religion, whereof the advancement ought to be always in their eye.

But what can one imagine is the main end, which in their rude contempt of the Gospel of the Holy *Jesus*, our modern Free-thinkers are really driving at? If it is the characteristic of a Free-thinker to oppose established opinions in matters of religion, popular superstition and bigotry; the Apostles of our Lord were, beyond question, the most resolute and determined Free-thinkers

thinkers that ever breathed common air: And we know by what particular views they were animated. Their great design was, to put an end to that idolatry and superstition, to those false and absurd religions, to all those immoral and infamous opinions and practices, with which human nature, for many ages, had been disgraced and corrupted. But here they did not rest, and leave the world destitute of all religion whatsoever; they proceeded in their design, and, in place of the abominations then every where prevalent, they introduced and propagated the knowledge of the true God, and the assurance of an after-life and immortality: they published to mankind a religious worship suited to the perfections of God; and taught us a system of laws calculated to our happiness in private and public life, in time and to eternity. Thus the Priest of *Jupiter*, regarding the Apostles as gods, was actually upon the point of honouring them with sacrifices, *Which when the Apostles heard of, they ran in among the people, crying out, Sirs, Why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein,* Acts xiv. 13. Their general Command is, that *we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, in all goodness, righteousness, and truth; and following peace with all men, and holiness, without*

out which, they tell us, no man shall see the Lord,
Tit. ii. 10. Eph. v. 9. Heb. xii. 14. The design therefore of the Apostles of our Lord, is to bring the world *from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God;* it is to persuade mankind, upon the most powerful motives, to live here in the love and practice of all goodness, that we may live hereafter in the enjoyment of all happiness. A glorious design! in the pursuit whereof they did and suffered beyond the common rate of mortals, and thereby expressed an extraordinary love and charity, an unparalleled kindness and beneficence to mankind. So that thus far, may I not hope, every reasonable man will be so far from calumniating, that he will highly applaud the Apostles, who with such a design opposed the idolatry, the superstition and bigotry every where rampant all over the face of the earth? But some people, it would seem, are pleased to apprehend, That that antient set of bold resolute Free-thinkers have brought mankind only to exchange one kind of superstition for another; and therefore a modern set of Free-thinkers have started up among us, who eagerly oppose the religion which they published. And what, I beseech you, is the grand plot of those our modern reformers? Whatever it be, they carry it on, not after the same manner, or with the same dispositions, with which the Apostles conducted theirs.

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In the management of their design, the Apostles, always attending to this excellent maxim, which our modern Free-thinkers seem to have wholly neglected, viz. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,* are acted by no intemperate fiery zeal, by no mad enthusiastic rage; there is no anger, or revenge, or fury in their passions, breaking out in rude audacious invectives against the public religions established by law, or in the foulest and most abusive language upon persons and things that are held sacred; nor in matters so serious as are those of religion, do we find them in an unmanly levity and wantonness of heart, any where playing the ludicrous droll; of no such folly, insolence, or outrage can one single instance be met withal, either in their temper, or in their language, or in any part of their behaviour: But in a plain and simple narration they give us the history of their Master, the great Author of the religion they taught; with a gravity becoming their undertaking, they propose to us his doctrines, as matters indeed of the last consequence, which they therefore invite and press us to examine and embrace upon the highest encouragements, but far from insinuating they must be forced or obtruded upon us by violence, and only telling us what shall be the issue of our receiving or rejecting them in futurity; designing the good of all mankind, they travel through the world, and in circumstances the most provoking, the aptest

aptest to rouse and inflame the angry revengeful passions of human nature, they are unprovoked and intire masters of themselves; they are meek and gentle, patient and forgiving; they still retain their univeral charity, and express the most friendly concern for the real happiness of their bitterest enemies. After this manner, and with such dispositions, did those antient resolute Free-thinkers, the Apostles of our Lord, carry on their design, in opposing the idolatry, the superstition and bigotry, into which mankind had sunk: And let the writings of our modern Free-thinkers, compared with those of the Apostles, testify to the world, how widely different their conduct is in opposing the religion of *Jesus*. such are the measures they employ, that if from those one may judge of the religion they would frame for mankind, it must be full of wrathful scurrilous passions.

But by what measures soever those Gentlemen may be pleased to prosecute their design; I am at a loss to understand what it is, or what is the great point of view they are aiming at. The religion of *Jesus*, at its first appearance in the world, was very ill received. Princes and people, Priests and Philosophers, men of all ranks, vigorously combined in a violent opposition to the Apostles, using every method to suppress their doctrines, and every where distressing their persons with the cruellest persecutions: And all this we know they did with

a resolute purpose to preserve the idolatry and superstition, the worship of the false impious gods, and all the abominations, which then prevailed in the world. How far it is matter of regret to our modern Free-thinkers, that those first opposers of Christianity were not more successful, and that Heathenism did not prevail, and that worship continue established among mankind, that was paid to *Jupiter*, and *Venus*, and other deities, to whom human blood, and all sorts of the vilest prostitutions, were acceptable offerings and delightful services, I will not pretend to determine: Only in venting their unaccountable spite against the Christian Revelation, they sometimes seem to alledge, that the world would have done better, had they been still the worshippers of that rabble of gods and goddesses which the Gospel has exposed and banished. But whatever be the misfortune, which those Gentlemen may think has befallen the world from the prevalency of Christianity, let them now precisely declare, What is the great end they have in view, whilst they so violently oppose that institution. No doubt, as *Nero* and other *Roman* Emperors intended by their persecutions, and as *Celsus*, *Porphyry*, *Julian*, &c. intended by their writings; our Infidels are likewise intending the total extirpation of the religion of *Jesus*. But in place thereof, what is it they propose should be substituted? Most of those Gentlemen having made their objections, and expressed their fierce and

and outragious passions in the foulest and most indecent language, against the Christian Revelation, seem to concern themselves no farther about the religion of mankind. But, as it is impossible for mankind, without some kind of religion, to subsist together, I cannot suffer myself to think, that they mean to rob the world of all religion whatsoever. Let us suppose then, what Heaven has declared shall never happen; let us, I say, suppose, that these Gentlemen have carried their design, and Christianity is wholly extinguished. After what manner will they now be pleased to dispose of us, or what is the religion wherein they would chuse to train us up, or which they would recommend to our belief and practice? The Religion of *Jesus* is, indeed, not very social; it will admit of no object of worship but the true God, and of no form of worship but of his appointment. But, before this religion made its appearance, there was in the world a vast variety of religious objects, and religious forms of worship; and now that, we here suppose, it is quite abolished, do these abolishers of Christianity mean to bring us back to where the world was about seventeen hundred years ago, to those religious institutions which then every where prevailed among mankind? Or, if they do not mean to oppres us with so great a mobb of gods and goddesses, and their absurd and infamous, and pernicious worship; is there any particular religious

ligious institution, any where to be found in the world, then professed by any particular man, or society of men, which, to the exclusion of every other institution, they design we should now take up withal? If either of these be intended, is it not fair we should be informed of it? Or, have they discovered any new system of religion, not before known in the world, wherein they design we should be instructed and confirmed? And, if this be the case, why do they not publish their new system, and honestly let us know, what God we must serve, and what worship we must pay him, and by what motives, suited to our rational nature, we must be animated in his service? It cannot well be expected that men, not altogether indifferent to matters so very important, will change their religion, on any other consideration, but for a better. They speak, indeed, in general, of a religion of Nature, which they seem to imagine all mankind, left to themselves, would naturally follow; after the same manner, I suppose, as brute creatures follow their instinct. A very senseless conceit in the case of creatures, whose passions do first prevail and prevent all other government, and never tamely yield up their empire. But would these gentlemen favour the world, as *Spinoza* has done, with a particular explanation of their sentiments concerning God, and the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, which, when rightly

rightly apprehended, are the great foundation of true rational religion, I am afraid we should find them in the utmost confusion, differing widely from one another, and breaking into various sects and parties.

It is true, the shrewdest book I know of against the Christian revelation, mentions those fundamental articles of religion; and, upon the truth of such principles, recommends to mankind the *law of reason*, or the *religion of Nature*, as the only religion that can come from God, or bear the stamp of his authority. From whence the Author would infer, that the religion of *Jesus*, in particular, is an imposition upon the world, and can be counted no divine Revelation. Here therefore the Christian institution is set aside, and in its room is substituted the religion of Nature, grounded upon the being and perfections of God, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments. But I would beg to be informed, in what age, and in what part of the world, was this religion known and professed among mankind? We are told, it is as old as the creation. And no doubt, the religion of Nature is as old as the nature of things; and so is every geometrical or mathematical truth, tho', I verily believe, all mankind were not mathematicians from the beginning. But, I say, when or where was the person, the family, or the nation, upon the face of the earth, that knew and professed this religion, as contradistinguished

stinguished from every other religious institution? From the earliest times, to this present age, ransack all the records in the world, I dare venture to affirm, not one instance shall be found of people's professing only this particular system of religion. It is therefore a religious institution absolutely new, which Dr. *Tindal* proposes to mankind, an institution that never yet obtained in the world, and which, I strongly incline to think, never will obtain. I confess, that in this Gentleman's view of things, one might expect to find only this religion subsisting among mankind, and that the finding it quite otherwise, is the most surprising event that can possibly happen. In his opinion, the knowledge of the religion of Nature is a matter of no difficulty: He apprehends that all its essential articles are obvious to every common understanding, and that no man needs an instructor to teach him the being and perfections of God, the immortality of the soul, or a future state of rewards and punishments, and what particular duties, in his several relations, are incumbent upon him. So that every man being able to instruct himself in the religion of Nature, and this religion being confessedly the great foundation of human happiness in both worlds, *Revelation is needless*, and every other religious institution is vain and to no purpose. In this view it is that I have considerd Dr. *Tindal's* book in my

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Necessity of Revelation, and I still hope, that I have there, from undoubted matters of fact, clearly demonstrated the falseness of his argument.

No doubt, Dr. *Tindal* was capable of demonstrating all the essential articles of natural religion, and of shewing their foundation in the nature and reason of things. But how came this Gentleman by all this knowledge? The best and wisest of the Heathen Philosophers were not able to acquire it. They were ignorant of God, and had it not in their power to discover him. Not long before the Christian Revelation, the great *Roman Orator* and Philosopher, master of all the Heathen learning, laughs at the notion of an infinite mind, or of the true God, which *Anaxagoras*, the reputed author of it, could have had only from tradition; he rejects it as an absurdity, and in the end recommends the supreme God of the Stoicks, an ardor, or æther, a material fire pervading the universe, as the being whose Divinity seems the most probable. In fact, therefore, it is certain, that, at the time when the Gospel was first published, the Heathen world was without God, and all the different sects of Philosophers had each of them, for their supreme God, only the creature of their own imagination. A most amazing state of ignorance! But how soon after that happy Æra did the knowledge of the true God prevail among all nations; and with

with what constancy has it hitherto been preserved in the Christian world?

I am apt to think, that none of those Gentlemen, who now propose to abolish Christianity, and to establish in its place the religion of Nature, are so very conceited of their own abilities, as to imagine, that had they lived in the days of *Pythagoras*, or of *Socrates*, or of *Cicero*, &c. they would have been the Philosophers to discover the being and perfections of God, they would have made the world sensible of their superior penetration in demonstrating all the essential articles of natural religion. And as it cannot well be thought, that our present religious projectors would have gone beyond the reach of all antient Philosophers; and we are well assured, that the Heathen world, after the days of *Cicero*, had their knowledge of God from the Christian Revelation; may not these Gentlemen have the modesty or justice to own, that the same great article of knowledge is derived to them from the same source? How they could have it otherwise is unimaginable. And is it not a mean piece of ingratitude, an unworthy perversion of the heavenly gift, to make use of the knowledge they have, and which they could only have from Revelation, in destroying Revelation itself?

The blessed *Jesus* taught the world, what no Philosopher ever before taught, and what he himself could not have taught but from Heaven, all the fundamental articles, and all
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the great duties of natural religion, originally belonging to rational creatures of our make, in society (not in enmity) with God, and with one another: And this religion he has interwoven into the essence, if I may speak so, of his institution. But he likewise taught other articles, concerning a public indemnity, &c. suited to the sinful guilty circumstances, to the broken corrupted powers of mankind; not in society, but in enmity with God, and alienated from one another: And all such articles are intended to recover the primary religion of Nature, or to restore mankind to their first constitution, as we came righteous and pure out of the hands of our Maker; that being made partakers of the divine nature, we may be found fit for the heavenly mansions. Now, I say, do not these Gentlemen act a strange unaccountable part, who, adopting the essential articles of natural religion, which lay for beyond the reach of their discovery, and were originally revealed to them by the blessed *Jesus*; and judging those articles sufficient to all the purposes of happiness, are pleased to reject all the other articles of the institution of *Jesus*, tho' revealed and enjoyed by the same authority, and plainly subsidiary to the religion of Nature; and to count the religion of *Jesus* an imposture? *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise!*

These our modern Reformers, so zealous to abolish Christianity, and to introduce (for I speak

speak not here of Atheists and Sceptics) the religion of Nature, as the only religion fitted to the nature of man, and which alone mankind ought to profess; do not seem to be altogether so well qualified for their undertaking; they do not consider things as they are adapted to rational creatures in different circumstances.

By the acknowledgement of the Heathen, human minds were not always in their present depraved situation. If therefore we consider mankind in their original state, a state of innocence and integrity, having their minds enlightened with all necessary knowledge, and all the powers of human nature duly balanced and adjusted, so that reason governs, and all the passions are obedient: As one may now easily apprehend the religion of Nature, that is suited to creatures thus in society, or in perfect friendship with God, and with one another; so one may judge it manifest, that this primary religion, founded in the original nature and state of things, is, of itself, without any foreign aid, fully sufficient to their happiness.

But, if we consider mankind in a different light, void of innocence and integrity, guilty and unrighteous, destitute of spiritual knowledge, in gross darkness and ignorance, having the balance of their constitution quite broken and disordered; so that reason has lost its authority, and is now only subservient to
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the prevalency of passion: Here the moral world is greatly altered, and a new set of relations is introduced: Mankind have revolted; they are in a state of enmity with God, and are far from being friendly to one another.

No longer therefore can the primary religion of Nature suit the circumstances, and, of itself, answer the happiness of miserable mankind. Of necessity, if we are not irreversibly doomed to destruction, the gracious Governor of the world must frame some new plan or scheme, whereby to reduce his rebellious subjects, and to recover them to those moral dispositions, that may in some measure fit them for his mercy and favour, and for the enjoyment of happiness. No doubt, the primary religion of Nature is, in all events, the only immediate foundation of rational happiness; nor can any religious institution, where this is not an essential or the main ingredient, be conceived to come from God. But, I say, in the present circumstances of mankind, wherein things are changed from their original constitution, and new relations have supervened; some adventitious terms must be propounded by the great Ruler of the universe, to be religiously observed by mankind, answering to that change, and to those new relations; and subsidiary to the primary religion of Nature, the immediate and the lasting

ing spring of happiness. The only adventitious term which the Deists, I mean those who confess the essential articles of natural religion, will, I suppose, here admit of, is repentance, a change of heart and life, or a returning to God and our duty. But, if the sound of the word does not frighten them out of their sense and reason, must they not admit likewise of faith, as another adventitious term; I mean *Faith in the mercy of God*, as it concerns the pardoning of sinners, and the receiving them into favour, upon their *ceasing to do evil and their learning to do well?* In the nature of things, it is impossible for any man to repent without the hopes of mercy, or of God's being merciful to him in particular. So that our rational Deists, who set up to instruct mankind in matters of religion, must be *Preachers both of faith and of repentance*, and therein, in general, come so far to agree with Christians.

But as faith and repentance do not belong to the primary religion of Nature, but are adventitious terms or articles, arising from the change of circumstances and relations between God and man, and that become our duty upon our apprehending that God is gracious and merciful; the great question is, Will God extend this his grace and mercy to all kinds of sins, how hainous and daring soever; to any whatever number of sins; or to a long continued course of sinning; or will he extend it to

to the rebellious race of mankind, without any atonement or sacrifice? Such Deists as have any hopes of mercy, must, without doubt or scruple, resolve all such questions in the affirmative. But, for my part (conscious of no bias in reference to such questions, I am sure I have none) I most sincerely declare, that to determine them *a priori*, or from the bare contemplation of the perfections of God, appears to me impossible. Nor am I able to conceive, how any man, from his own knowledge of things, can be confident, that the sovereign Lord of the universe must or will certainly pursue such particular measures, in the case of a whole system of rational creatures their having revolted or rebelled against him. I incline to think, that the all-comprehensive sovereign Mind having the whole universe in one view, is alone capable of judging what are the measures, upon so important an event, the most proper, and the best adapted to the reducing of his rebel-subjects, and to the establishing of the rest of his creation. Sure I am, that the evidence we have for the Christian Revelation is infinitely stronger, than any evidence the Deists can pretend to have for their solution of the above questions. In particular, if it is so obvious to the human mind, that no atonement or sacrifice is necessary to the expiating of sin, it is the most surprising thing imaginable, not only how mankind came so universally to conceive a prevailing sense to
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the contrary, but how the notion of a sacrifice, as a piece of service acceptable to God, and of consequence to the guilty persons, came ever to enter into the mind of man. To make such an institution as that of sacrifices a human contrivance (or to lay it to the charge of Priest-craft, especially as the first Priests were the fathers of families, and in virtue of their paternal character, officiating only within their own families, had no separate interest to bias them) can, in my apprehension, be justified by no plausible reason whatsoever. But I mention these things only by the way. What I here mean is to lead our Free-thinkers to reflect, that if they do really intend to promote the interest of natural religion, they can nowhere meet with better assistance, with more powerful aids, than from the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*.

It is agreed, that the being and perfections of God, the immortality of human souls, and a future state of rewards and punishments, are the great fundamental principles of natural religion. Now, upon these very principles, the Gospel of our Lord is intirely grounded. Nay, so peculiar are these principles to the Christian Institution, that from hence, as in fact it is most apparent, they were derived and propagated all over the Heathen world. And what is the particular relating to any of these principles, so far as they concern the moral

ral conduct of mankind, wherein the Gospel can be judged defective or erroneous.

We are there taught, that as God did at first frame and create the universe, all things in heaven and in earth ; so, being every where present, he upholds all things by the word of his power, and in his providence governs all things according to his wisdom and goodness ; that he observes all the actions of his rational creatures, even those that pass in the inmost recesses of the soul ; that he is of spotless purity, infinitely holy, delighting in the purity and rectitude of his rational creatures, whose obedience and goodness he will reward to eternity ; hating sin and every moral turpitude, which he cannot but punish for ever. Such are the notions we have concerning God from the Gospel of our Lord. And therein likewise we are assured, that what changes soever may happen to the body, the soul is immortal, and our existence shall never come to a period. So that having concluded our state of trial in this world, we shall be disposed of in the other world, in happiness or misery *according to the deeds done in the body*, as we have maintained or forfeited our innocence and integrity, or have cultivated or neglected, or have improved or corrupted the moral dispositions of the mind. Thus, I say, from the Gospel of our Lord; we come to understand the fundamental principles of natural religion. And from hence also

we learn, what are the particular duties incumbent upon us, as they arise from the nature of God and of man, or from the relations we bear to God and to one another.

There we are told, that God, not confined to place, fills the heavens and the earth with his presence; that he is infinite in all perfections, of almighty power, unbounded wisdom, and over-flowing goodness, tenderly concerned for the happiness of all his creatures; our great Creator and preserver, *in whom we live, and move, and have our being*; our best and greatest benefactor, *from whom every good and perfect gift cometh down*: and the bountiful never-failing rewarder of all that love and obey him. And answerably to this character and to these relations, it is our bounden duty to admire and adore this great Being; to acknowledge our whole dependence is upon him; to employ our bodies and souls, his workmanship and property, faithfully in his service; to praise and thank him for the numberless blessings he bestows on us, and has laid up in store for us; and to use all the gifts of his providence, in the manner, and to the purposes, he directs: In a word, it is our bounden duty, to have God in all our thoughts, to imitate him the great Parent of mankind, or *to be perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

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But, in the Gospel of our Lord, we are further taught, that as we are all the creatures of God, *who giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; so he hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth.* Here then we are given to understand, that the whole human race is but one large family under the protection and government of one sovereign Lord, the common Parent of all. As therefore all mankind thus naturally knit together by the endearing bonds of blood and kindred, make up only one body, and we are all members one of another, it is easy to observe, that to this constitution of things, nothing can be more essential or natural, than a common spirit animating the whole community, or inspiring all the individuals of the same body, with the same care one for another, and thereby uniting them in their joint endeavours to promote their common good and happiness. So that here we see all human kind naturally associated together, all enlivened by the same spirit, and under the sovereign law of universal benevolence, wherein every thing virtuous is included, all acting in their intercourse with one another, every man for the good of his neighbour: From whence must arise universal peace, joy and comfort. And as we thus behold all mankind united to God, our great Head and the common Parent of the universe, in all the acts of piety and devotion, obeying and imitating this great Being, or *loving*

ving the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind; and, at the same time, being the members of one common body, conspiring together in our mutual endeavours to advance each other's happiness, every man loving his neighbour as himself; so it is to be considered, that in this constitution of things, every man, placing his highest pleasure in promoting the glory of God, and the good of mankind, will so preserve the inward balance of his nature, as to be always disposed and ready to attend to these purposes. To all which it must be added, that in the discharge of every branch of our duty, every man is powerfully inspirited, not only from the high delights that arise from the cheerful exercise of universal love and benevolence, and from the applauses of our fellow men; but from the assured hopes of the continuance of the favour and protection of God, and of our coming in the end to a glorious immortality.

This, in my apprehension, is the primary religion of Nature, which we learn from the Gospel of our Lord, and given to man in his primary constitution, when in a state of integrity, it would be absurd and impertinent to imagine, it contains articles concerning faith and repentance. It relates only to creatures of loyal dispositions, that have not renounced their allegiance, and revolted against God. It is of infinite value, and of the last consequence to the happiness of mankind in God, and in one another: And

so it is esteemed in the Christian Revelation, where it is preferred before every thing else, where we are commanded to be *perfecting holiness in the fear of God*, where every man is rated in proportion to the degrees of this perfection he has acquired, and where we are told expressly, that *without charity*, wherein is comprehended the whole of natural religion, all other endowments, whereby people can be distinguished, are wholly insignificant. And thus far, I hope, our modern Free-thinkers will regard the Gospel of our Lord with a friendly eye, and judge it no enemy to the mighty concern they profess for the good of mankind. They will undoubtedly consider it as a powerful assistant in laying the foundation, and establishing the noble plan of universal happiness.

But, with this primary religion of Nature, if we compare the manners, the customs, and habits of mankind every where prevalent, where do we see the agreement? how wide is the difference? The unconformity and contradictions are universally apparent. Consider the human race in all ages, and all over the inhabited earth; where is the nation; where is the family; where is the single person, that comes up to this standard, and is thereby uniformly and steadily governed? The history of the world, even that part of it that is the most renowned, and what people mostly admire, is little else but the history of the violations of the primary laws and religion of Nature. Nay, comparing this primary religion

ligion with the present constitution of human nature, it appears incontestable, in fact, I do not say in speculation, that the rational powers of mankind are not proportioned, either to the knowledge, or to the practice of natural religion.

I confess, the learned *Pocock* in his *Philosophus Autodidactus*, represents a man, when left to himself, and having no instructor whatsoever, to think and argue with great penetration and acuteness upon the *Cartesian* principles, and to find out both the nature of the soul, and the being and perfections of God. And, doubtless, every Philosopher having the same good opinion of human powers, would, upon his own particular principles, represent a man, in the exercise of his own natural unassisted faculties, growing up of himself to be as learned and knowing with respect to the same articles. But, stepping out of this ideal world of our own framing, into that wherein we meet with facts, or with mankind exerting their natural powers, our experience is far from answering our speculation; so far from answering it, that the human mind is found every where overwhelmed in thick darkness, through which it is not able to penetrate, and to reach the knowledge of the true God, necessary to the being of natural religion. But this question I have elsewhere fully explained. And, in *Cicero's* first book *concerning the Nature of the Gods*, where he gives us an account of the different sentiments of Philosophers in relation to the Deity, every man must observe
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the gross ignorance wherein all Philosophers were involved, and that *from the wisdom of God manifested in the works of creation and providence, the world by all their wisdom, all their learning and philosophy, were not able to discern and know God.* How then can the inward powers of human nature, in its present situation, be judged proportioned to the knowledge of the religion of Nature?

And no better, I dare venture to affirm, are they proportioned to the practice. No Deist, I am apt to think, will pretend to point out any perfect character in life. The best of men have their own moral defects and weaknesses; and what the rest of mankind are, I need not say. In fact, nothing can be more certain than that *in many things we offend all*, and that *there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and finneth not.* To alledge therefore that human powers are equal to the observance of the laws, or of the religion of Nature, without our being able to instance in one perfect character that comes up to this standard, seems to be a vain conceit, an opinion wholly groundless and visionary. And, indeed, if we attend to human nature, at its first appearance in the case of children, one cannot but perceive how greatly disproportioned it is to the practice of natural religion. It matters not whether we imagine children capable of reason, or of being under a law; we see them exerting most of the passions of human nature, which in manhood are

are the springs of human actions. Thus in the first movements of our nature, as children come to be capable of distinguishing sensible objects, they very often discover anger, revenge, pride, envy, avarice, and other such malevolent passions. And are not all such passions proof sufficient, that human nature, in its native frame, or as it now comes into the world, is by no means formed to the practice of natural religion? Beyond question, as these passions prevent our reason, and prevail in the mind without any superior power to limit and direct them, our first appearance upon the stage as rational creatures, must be in a moral character, directly contrary to the religion of Nature. In short, such is our present unhappy situation, that when the season of our reason is approaching, it shoots out weakly, it proceeds by slow advances, and is long of coming to any degree of maturity; whilst our passions all the while continue vigorous, and are gathering strength daily. So that to acquire the mastery of one's passions, or to reduce them under the government of reason, must prove a laborious work, which few men will submit to: Nor any where in the world is any man to be found, who has brought his passions under such discipline, as in all instances to be intirely subject to the religion of Nature. Nay, in the present frame of our nature, so untowardly are we situated, that the very setting of bounds to our passions, excites their

their violence; a strange perverseness sensibly felt in all ages:

Ruimus in vetitum, ferimur, cupimusque negata.

All this, in common experience, is the real truth of things. And as all mankind are thus sinful and guilty before God, sunk in ignorance and corruption, with their rational powers so broken and disordered, that they are quite unequal to the knowledge and practice of natural religion; What course can our Free-thinkers, these our modern religious projectors, propose to take, in order to reclaim the world, and to establish among us the religion of Nature? Must they not instruct us in the knowledge of the fundamental articles of all religion, the being and perfections of God, the immortality of human souls, and a future state of rewards and punishments? Must they not convince us of our having revolted from the religion of Nature, and become liable to punishment? Must they not assure us, that God is so far reconciled to rebellious mankind, that he offers an indemnity to all that will return to their allegiance? And upon this, must they not preach both faith and repentance, and encourage us to lay down the weapons of our rebellion, and to submit our hearts and lives to the government of God; for that we may rest confident, that, upon our thus returning to our duty, God will not only shew us mercy in the forgiveness of our past offences.

offences, but for the future will continue by his grace to heal and strengthen the broken powers of our nature; and if we persevere in acquiring still higher degrees of goodness and righteousness, will reward us eternally? I say, if our modern Free-thinkers do really mean to serve mankind in their highest concerns, and would endeavour by all means possible to relieve them from impiety and vice, and the misery and ruin that attend them in both worlds, and to recover them to piety and virtue, and the comfort and happiness they afford us in time, and fit us to enjoy to eternity; where can they have their endeavours more powerfully seconded than by the religion of the blessed Jesus, an institution expressly intended *to put an end to sin, and to bring in everlasting righteousness?* Here we have the knowledge of all the essential principles of natural religion: And here all mankind are given to understand that they are alienated from the life of God, walking in the vanity of their mind, and are therefore obnoxious to his righteous judgments: Here it is, that in the plainest, the strongest, and the most moving terms, every penitent sinner is assured of mercy at the hands of God: And here faith and repentance are taught us as indispensably necessary to the pardon of sin: Here we are instructed in the whole of our moral conduct, and in following the instructions given us, *we become holy as God is holy:* Here by the most persuasive arguments

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we are encouraged to rest assured, that upon addressing ourselves to our heavenly Father, he will grant us the influences of his grace and spirit, to help our weakness, and to support us in the discharge of our duty: Here likewise we are animated in the pursuit of all goodness, by the most prevalent motives, the glorious hopes of a happy immortality, when, upon our having here *perfected holiness in the fear of God*, we shall be taken up into his heavenly mansions: And is it not owing to the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, that every where thro' the Christian world, in towns, and villages, and all over the country, churches, or, as one may justly call them, public schools, are erected, wherein public teachers are employed to train up mankind, without distinction, in the knowledge of their duty, and to persuade them to the love and practice of all righteousness? An institution of infinite moment, one would think, in the moral world; and the happy consequence is, a Christian Plowman, with respect to the fundamental articles of religion, is far more knowing and intelligent than any Heathen Philosopher. From whence then can such of our Deists, as do really mean to promote the highest happiness of human creatures, be furnished with better assistance, than from the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*? And what can one imagine is the reason why they make not use of this assistance, which they have every where at hand?

Their

Their great end, in the mighty change they would bring about in matters of religion, coincides with that of the Christian institution ; they pretend the good and well-being of human society, the peace and comfort of human minds here, and their lasting happiness hereafter : And, for the compassing of this end, if they would properly engage in the execution, the great means to be employed, are faith and repentance ; and these likewise are the means which the Christian institution recommends to us as of the last necessity. As therefore both the end and the means proposed and pursued by the Christian institution, are the same with those of our modern Free-thinkers, who, I here suppose, are zealously concerned for the religious improvement of mankind ; upon what good reason can they justify their neglect and contempt of the religion of *Jesus* ? There are indeed some circumstances relating particularly to the means, wherein Christians and Deists do differ widely from one another. In the Christian institution we are instructed, that it is thro' the merits and mediation of *Jesus Christ*, that our faith and repentance are accepted and available with God for the pardon of our sins, for our being re-instated in his favour, and our partaking of his happiness : But, on the other hand, our Free-thinkers loudly affirm, that faith and repentance are, of themselves, without regarding the merits and mediation of *Christ*, fully sufficient to all the purposes of pardon, and favour and

and happiness. But as this circumstance in the Christian scheme does in no degree alter the nature of faith and repentance, and the merits and mediation of *Christ* are efficacious to no man whatsoever, without a sincere faith and thorough repentance, more thorough, perhaps, and universal, than most of our Deists may judge necessary; it is amazing how these Gentlemen, upon this circumstance, have come to reject an institution, which, in the whole of its contexture, is altogether so friendly to the cause of piety and virtue, and whose main plot is to establish the happiness of man in the restoration of natural religion. For my part, were I a Deist, and had all the prevailing concern, which some of that sect pretend to have, for the moral good and happiness of mankind, so far would I be from pouring contempt upon the religion of *Jesus*, that without meddling with its peculiarities, I would, methinks, gladly embrace its assistance, and urge Christians with the absolute necessity of repentance and universal holiness, or of *denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly*; I would upbraid them with the looseness, the immorality and impiety of their lives, shamefully repugnant to the precepts of the Gospel, and scandalously reproachful to their holy profession; I would watchfully attend to the use they make of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and if in any measure they abused them, to the prejudice of the strictest virtue, I would

would make them sensible that *Christ is not the minister of sin*; I would openly expose the vanity of their hopes of being hereafter taken up into heaven as the heirs of glory, whilst here upon earth they live the slaves and servants of sin, *in the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, working iniquity with greediness*. In particular, if any bearing the name of *Christ* are so impious and unchristian as to persecute others for what concerns conscience or matters of religion, here I would raise my voice and call aloud, *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of: For the Son of man is come not to destroy men's lives, but to save them*. After this manner, I say, were I a Deist, concerned for the moral happiness of mankind, I would serve myself of the religion of *Jesuſ*, and improve it to the account, to the support and advancement of the religion of Nature. And as, in such a course our Free-thinkers, since they must favour the world with their religious productions, might find employment enough for their pens, so therein they would come to be great blessings to mankind, infinitely more beneficial, than they seem to be inventing their spleen against the truth of the Christian Revelation, wherein, I cannot but say with vast regret, they are infinitely hurtful to natural religion.

But possibly these Gentlemen are honester, and of more tender consciences than not openly to condemn, by the whole, a religious institution that

that contains in it only certain articles, which they are pleased not to approve of. And, I confess, they take great offence at the doctrine of the sacrifice of *Christ* offered up to God for the sins of the world, which they scruple not loudly to proclaim, a doctrine absurd in it self, and mischievous in its consequences. But, as I hinted before, are any of these Gentlemen able to demonstrate *a priori*, or from the nature of things, that such an institution is unworthy of God, and repugnant to the perfections of his nature; or that the wisdom and mercy of God (in a consistency with the interest of his universal government, comprehended only by an infinite mind) can be exerted in proclaiming an indemnity to sinful mankind in what we call a free and gratuitous manner, without the intervention of a sacrifice on the part of the guilty? I frankly acknowledge, such a demonstration is far beyond my abilities, nor have I yet seen it performed by any man. And upon a metaphysical problem impossible to be solved, how does it stand to reason, to reject the Gospel of *Jesus*, which, for the truth of its divinity, appeals to matters of fact? But how far soever it may be out of one's power to demonstrate *a priori*, that the great Sovereign of the world, before a general indemnity can be proclaimed to the rebellious race of mankind, must have an atonement, or a sacrifice of general efficacy, or whose merits may extend to the whole: Yet when we are assured, that God
has

has been pleased to provide such a sacrifice in the voluntary death of *Jesus* upon the cross, every free-thinking considerate man will come to observe, that such an institution is calculated to serve the best and the wisest purposes; in particular, that it is a constant awful warning to sinners, that if they persist in the evil of their ways, *serving divers lusts and pleasures*, it is impossible they can escape punishment; for *to that man who sinneth wilfully after that he hath received the knowledge of the truth, thare remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries*, Heb. x. 26, 27. And, on the other hand, that it is a standing gracious assurance to penitent sinners, that if they persist in their duty and obedience, God will not only forgive them their sins, but will bless and enrich them with every good and perfect gift; for *he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. So that the sacrifice of *Christ* is a sensible representation, which attended to (and every Christian is bound always or habitually to attend to it, and often in a solemn manner to commemorate the wonderful event) must powerfully and steadily operate both upon our fears and our hopes the great springs of human actions. A wise and gracious constitution! For tho' some people pretend, that from speculation, or abstract reasoning, they are sufficiently

sufficiently apprised, that wicked men shall be punished, and good men shall be rewarded ; yet these truths, supported by reason, and at the same time set forth to us in the strongest light that can affect our imagination, must, by this means, make the deeper impressions upon the mind ; and therefore come to be the more certain and successful in producing their proper effects. This, every body will own, is likely to be the case with respect to the bulk of mankind, not much given to speculation. And as all our other faculties, as well as our reason, ought to contribute their assistance in improving our religious dispositions, even our Philosophers will be nothing the worse for having such an address made to their imagination.

It is however alledged, that this sacrifice of *Christ*, his obedience or righteousness, and his purchasing for us mercy and forgiveness, and an inheritance in heaven, are doctrines that altogether supersede, or greatly extenuate the concern we ought to have for personal righteousness. And were these the necessary or natural consequences of these doctrines, as such doctrines can never possibly come from God, I here openly avow, I would renounce them ; which is the plain language of every true Christian. But so far are those doctrines, as they are taught us in the Gospel, from having any such pernicious influence over our moral conduct, that, on the contrary, no doctrines can be better calculated to prevail with human minds, as they

are now situated, to renounce every foolish and hurtful lust, and to devote themselves to the love and practice of all goodness and righteousness. The case is commonly illustrated after this manner: "The Kings son, a Prince of an illustrious character, having, by a series of noble actions, acquired lasting prosperity and a mighty accession of glory to the nation, has raised himself to a high degree of merit with the Sovereign. As therefore a particular province of his father's vast dominions have revolted, and by their rebellion have exposed themselves to certain destruction, the Prince is pleased to interpose in their favour; and, in recompence or acknowledgement of his merit, obtains a merciful grant, that the destruction due to those rebels shall, for such a certain limited time, be suspended; that, in the mean while, a general indemnity shall be published, and that all assurances shall be given to every individual, that whoever shall lay down their arms, and return to their allegiance and duty, shall not only meet with pardon and mercy, but be re-established in all the privileges and blessings of the most faithful subjects." This, I say, may in some sort represent the nature and tendency of these doctrines of the Gospel, which our Infidels alledge, do prevent our being concerned for any inherent personal righteousness. And as no man in his right senses, can imagine that this intercession of the Prince, and his laying out his

his merits with his father, in purchasing an indemnity for his rebellious subjects, and their being taken into favour, upon their returning to their duty within a limited time, is an encouragement for those rebels to persist in their rebellion, and to abandon all thoughts of ever becoming dutiful and loyal; so nothing but gross ignorance, I beg leave to say, or a malicious misrepresentation of the doctrines of the Gospel concerning the sacrifice of *Christ*, &c. can betray one into an opinion, that those doctrines pervert the moral dispositions of mankind, prevent an apprehension of the necessity of holiness, or render us careless and indifferent as to the inward rectitude and integrity of our nature. No one doctrine of the Christian institution do I know, of such mischievous tendency, or that our Deists have the least reason to suspect of a bad influence on morality. Nor in all Revelation is there the smallest appearance of any thing substituted in the room of truth and moral righteousness, that can intitle us to any share in the purchase of our Saviour: Every article and every sentence declare the contrary. Our Infidels, therefore, vainly conceiting they have ruined the credit of the Gospel, and meaning to inform mankind of the mighty service they have therein done them, do very injudiciously and very foolishly make these reflections: “ When men, say they, “ know they are to have nothing but what “ they work for, when they are assured they
“ are

" are not born to an estate in the kingdom of
" heaven of another's purchasing, they will not
" idly live in the faith of it, but go to work,
" and endeavour their outmost to work out
" their own salvation with care and diligence.
" And this Treatise, says the Author, having
" exposed Christianity, will prove of real service
" to religion, and make men's practices better;
" when they shall find they have nothing else
" to depend on for happiness here and here-
" after, but their own personal righteousness,
" with their love of wisdom and truth *."

Such reflections, as they bear in them a notoriously false imputation on the Gospel of Jesus, can come from no mind that is not blinded by the strongest prejudices. Nor in the case of those Deists who profess a concern for the religion of Nature, can I impute to any other cause what I always thought matter of wonder, their not taking the assistance of the Christian Revelation, but endeavouring to bring it into universal contempt.

Most certain it is, that the peculiar doctrines of Christianity relating to *Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*, are so far from abating the indispensable necessity of our own personal righteousness, that they greatly improve and augment it. However, if those Gentlemen

* The Resurrection of Jesus considered, in answer to the Trial of the Witness, p. 83.

cannot

cannot change their opinion, but must still think, that such doctrines, as the sacrifice of Christ, his merits, and purchase, are sufficient objections to the truth of the Gospel, herein they must stand or fall to their own master. But, if they apprehend, that those doctrines may be so managed as to prove a bar to virtue and an encouragement to vice; in this case, I would presume to advise them to watch over the conduct of those treacherous Christians, those false Teachers, that would pervert those doctrines to such purposes, and bring in damnable heresies; they cannot use them with severity enough, or sufficiently expose them to the contempt of mankind; and they may well tell them, as Julian did the Christians of his time, with respect to persecution, that “they were not so taught “neither by *Jesus* nor by *Paul*.” This I would reckon wise and prudent, and highly consistent with the concern they express for the cause of virtue; but the attempting to abolish Christianity is mad and extravagant. The religion of Nature is the morality of the religion of *Jesus*, to which the Gospel proposes to exalt human nature, and which it esteems at such a rate, or of such high moment and importance, that all its other doctrines are made subservient to its advancement, till *we shall escape the pollutions of this world, and become holy as God is holy*. And as they are thus intimately connected together, how can the Gospel or the religion of *Jesus* suffer, without its morality likewise

likewise suffering? One should think, that to pour contempt upon the whole, is to shed reproach upon the parts, those especially that are the essential ingredients. So that the success of the attempt to ruin the religion of *Jesus* would, at the same time, infallibly ruin the religion of Nature, and come in time to reduce the world into that dismal state of idolatry and superstition, wherein mankind, before the Christian Revelation, had been for many ages sunk and overwhelmed.

But our modern Infidels do not attack the religion of Nature by consequence only; they attack it directly, in attempting to discredit the morality of the religion of *Jesus*, whose moral doctrines and precepts, they would persuade the world, are in some articles useless, in others foolish and absurd, and in others hurtful and mischievous. But having shown, particularly, *Sect. VIII.* how very groundless such imputations are, I shall here only remark, that as the filling people's heads with prejudices against the morality of the religion of *Jesus*, cannot fail to alienate people's minds from every branch of the Christian institution, and in particular, must prevent their aspiring to that perfection of piety and virtue, of universal goodness and righteousness, which the Gospel commands us to pursue, as absolutely necessary to our compleat and lasting felicity; so, of course, it basely flatters the loose, vicious propensions of human nature, and betrays the world into mean

mean trifling pursuits, into a licentiousness of manners, highly offensive to natural religion, and infinitely mischievous to mankind. In my apprehension, therefore, our free-thinking Gentlemen, in their opposition to the religion of *Jesus*, pretend what they will, are acting a part far from being friendly to the religion of Nature, far from being beneficial to the rational world.

I know there are some Deists who, although they laugh at all Revelation, yet judging a public religion necessary, are contented with the Christian, and, as they affect to speak, suffer-
“ing its votaries quietly to triumph in the supposed goodness of their cause,” do condemn the making any open attempt to discredit or ruin it. And so far, perhaps, one may venture to applaud the prudence and moderation of those Gentlemen. But, if one might follow them into their retirements, I would be guilty of a little intrusion, in order to prevail with them to observe a consistency and uniformity of conduct; and not to act the secret enemy, or to use their endeavours in private, to inspire people’s minds, especially those of the younger sort, with an aversion and contempt of that religion, which they approve of as necessary to the public interest. Such an approbation, or their being contented with the Christian institution as fit to be publicly established, and their condemning every open attempt to reproach it, is, one cannot but think, sufficient evidence, that in that institution

I P R E F A C E.

institution they find no article hurtful to society; I should rather say, that all its doctrines and precepts, all its rewards and punishments, are useful and beneficial, and of consequence to promote peace, and order, and happiness among mankind: For to what other purposes can a public religion be judged necessary? And indeed every man that thinks freely will ingenuously confess, that such is the real character of the religion of Jesus: For therein *the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality; eternal life: But to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath: Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: But glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God,* Tit. ii. 11. Rom. ii. 6. That religion, surely, well deserves and is highly fit to be publicly established, wherein we have such commands laid upon us to be universally regarded: Finally, *Breibren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever*

soever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things, Philip. iv. 8. At which rate we should be filled *with the fruits of righteousness, and have the peace of God reigning among us.* And if the Christian institution be thus fit to be publicly established; how come those Gentlemen to alledge, that it is not fit to be privately entertained or regarded? Openly to approve of its being the public religion, and secretly to whisper to the world about them, that it ought not to be private or personal, is not only mean and treacherous, but foolish and preposterous, it prevents all the good effects of a public establishment, it serves to render men Hypocrites or Atheists, and must destroy all the confidence that one man can have in another upon religious principles: Nor can it well be thought, that the man who deals doubly with God, will deal fairly by his neighbour. Those Gentlemen, therefore, who judge a public religion necessary to the peace and order of the world, and that to this purpose the Christian religion is well enough adapted, and do nevertheless secretly endeavour to bring this religion into contempt, have got into a piece of conduct, that tends to the dissolution and ruin of human society.

But whilst Gentlemen apprehend, that a public religion is necessary, and are so far satisfied with the Christian, that they condemn every open attempt to ruin its credit, or impair its

authority, upon what good reason can they justify their secretly endeavouring to fill people's minds with prejudices against it, or to misrepresent it as an object of contempt and aversion? A strange management this; they publicly profess the community have done well in establishing it; and underhand they would persuade all the individuals of the community to despise it! But, I say, by what good reason are they able to justify their secret attempts in alienating people's minds from the Christian institution; so that, let the herd of mankind chuse what they will, it must not be entertained by any Gentleman as a private or personal religion? Does it debase our notions of the majesty, the nature and perfections of God, or of the worship and adoration due to him? Why, they tell us, that it sets up a partner or rival to God, in the person of his Son. But herein they betray their ignorance. The Gospel teacheth us, that the Son is indeed *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, not however the partner or rival of the Father, but his minister whom he employed in the creation of the universe, and in the redemption and restauration of sinful mankind; whom he still employs in the government of the world; and whom at the last day he will employ in judging the quick and the dead: At which grand and awful period, *the Son shall put down all rule, and all authority and power, and deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; and be subject*

subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28. And in which of these articles is any man able to discern a shadow of rivalship? Or, does the Christian institution deprave our sentiments concerning moral goodness and righteousness, so as to prevent our acting our part as it becomes us, in the various conditions and relations of life? Were this the case, those Gentlemen act a laudable part in guarding mankind against it. But wherein does it spoil the man, the husband or the wife, the parent or the child, the master or the servant, the magistrate or the subject, the seller or the buyer, the neighbour, the friend, the enemy, or any other character whatsoever, whether civil or religious? As therefore our Deists have no system of rules, no set of motives, of rewards and punishments, better and more powerful, more manly and rational, more conducive and effectual to render us better men and better citizens, and to dispose and prepare our minds for peace and comfort here, and joy and happiness hereafter; what is it they can recommend to their disciples of greater consequence to mankind, in public or in private life, with respect to time, or to eternity? Is it in their power to show us the excellency of their scheme, and the service they are doing to mankind, in the reformation of the lives of their proselytes, who *formerly living without God in the world, and serving divers lusts and pleasures,* are now strictly pious and virtuous?

virtuous? Or, can they shew us, that piety and virtue, every branch of goodness and righteousness, and consequently the happiness of mankind in both worlds, are more secure upon their principles, than upon the principles of the Gospel? For my part, let them conceit the light of Nature to be as full, and clear, and obvious as they please, I dare venture to affirm, that it propounds no restraints from irreligion and vice, no encouragements to piety and virtue, that come up to those of the Christian Revelation. How then can one avoid the concerning melancholy reflection, that those Gentlemen, in attempting, whether secretly or openly, to discredit the religion of *Jesus*, are sadly corrupting the morals of mankind. They bereave people of the true light, and rob them of the superior encouragements, and relieve them from the stronger restraints of Revelation, and putting them in their own hands, to follow any chance light that comes in their way, or to pursue the course of life which their own fancy may suggest to them, or which may happen to be in vogue and fashionable, or to which the sensual propensions of human nature may determine them; they set open the flood-gates of folly and vanity, of irreligion and wickedness, wherein people are come to such a height, that wholly devoted to their loose unmanly pleasures, to their trifling gaudy enjoyments, and having laid aside all thought of futurity, they pride themselves in showing

a neglect or contempt of every thing serious or sacred, *they glory in their shame.* So that all the open and secret attempts of our modern Free-thinkers, to break the credit of the religion of *Jesus*, are, in my apprehension, so many wild efforts to banish out of the world all piety and virtue: A most unhappy concurrence with the present depraved state of human nature, which, of itself, is abundantly *prone to commit iniquity with greediness.* Such remarks, I confess, are hard, and one has pain in making them: But the greatest misfortune is, they are true and well founded, and as the best and wisest laws, enforced by the strongest and most powerful sanctions, are not able to keep men within the bounds of their duty; every body will own, that a constitution of things less strict and rigorous, or rather indulgent to human passions, must prove infinitely dangerous to piety and virtue: Nor, can those persons who reject the former, and propagate the latter, be counted friends to mankind.

But the great argument which, I suppose, those Gentlemen employ, in order to prejudice the world about them, against the Christian institution, and whereof the unavoidable consequence is a looseness and extravagance of manners, is their assuring their disciples, that the first publishers of the Gospel were either Impostors or Enthusiasts. And how very groundless these imputations are, the Reader, I hope, will find clearly demonstrated in the following

following Sections. Here I shall observe, that, as the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a moral institution, than which nothing possibly can be contrived more friendly to the cause of piety and virtue, to universal goodness and righteousness, and to the comfort and happiness of mankind, in all the various relations of life, and in every stage of our existence, one is tempted to cry out, as old *Cato* does, with respect to the immortality of the soul, “ If I am mistaken in believing the divinity of the Christian Revelation, I gladly entertain the delightful mistake; and such support and comfort does it afford me here in time, and such joy and happiness does it promise me hereafter to eternity, that whilst I live no man shall rob me of it.”* And every sincere Christian, who forms his heart and life upon the precepts of the Gospel, has good reason to assure our Infidels, that they act a cruel part in going about to deprive him of that joy and peace he has in believing.

As for the entertainment which the Reader may expect in the following Treatise, the general Heads of it are here laid before him in the Contents. And, as the whole is designed for the bulk of mankind, I flatter myself, that

* Quod si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales esse credam, lubenter erro: Nec mihi hunc errorem, quo delector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo. Sin mortuus (ut quidam minuti philosophi censem) nihil sentiam: non vereor, ne hunc errorem meum mortui philosophi irrideant. Cic. de senect. cap. 23.

the particular explications are so full, so plain and obvious, that every common understanding may, without difficulty, perceive the truth of every branch of the argument; upon which, I would, fain think, it may be found proper for the use of private families, who amidst the confusion that infidelity is like to introduce among us, would do well to furnish themselves with some plain easy Treatise, level to every common capacity, and clearly demonstrating the truth of our holy religion. The resurrection of *Jesus* is, indeed, the capital point, on the truth of which depends the whole credit of Christianity: And as I have had occasion to consider that article in different lights, in vindicating the history thereof from the charge of forgery and contradiction, in shewing that the Apostles could not possibly be therein guilty of any fraud or deceit, and in demonstrating that in their belief of that wonderful event they were absolutely free from enthusiasm; I am in hopes that, with respect to that article, I have given the Reader the fullest satisfaction. At the same time, if the Reader agrees to what I have explained and demonstrated, *in my Inquiry into the Extent of Human Powers with respect to Matters of Religion*, namely, that mankind, left to themselves, are not able to discover the essential articles of natural religion, and that those articles, whereof we are now fully apprised, have been, most certainly, supernaturally revealed, I could wish, that in the perusal of the

the following Sheets, he would carry along with him those sentiments; as thereby, with the greater ease, he will clearly perceive the necessary connection, and the irresistible force, with which the argument proceeds and concludes in favour of the Christian Revelation. At any rate, the argument, in my apprehension, is beyond all reasonable dispute, and stands or falls with the common sense of mankind.

C O N-

C O N T E N T S.

S E C T. I.

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Thus far therefore having made it appear, that one may safely appeal to the Writings of the New Testament as authentic History, we proceed to demonstrate the Truth of the Christian Revelation.

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THE
TRUTH
OF THE
CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

SECT. I.

Wherein the truth or authenticity of the History of the Gospel is made out by the testimony of Heathen Writers.

BEFORE I enter upon the main argument, which I propose to handle in the following Treatise, since I am therein all along to appeal to the facts reported in the *New Testament* as certain and undoubted: It here seems necessary to satisfy the reader as to the evidence, upon which, in my apprehension, every impartial man must necessarily confess, *the history of the Gospel is authentic and genuine*. And, to set this article in the clearest light, I shall trace things from their original. Thus,

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A

Every

Every man who applies himself to study, and who, by his own researches, has come to the knowledge of things, cannot but have observed, that, as the particular things, or *existences*, whose several properties, relations and agreements, make up the matter of his knowledge, are various, and of quite different natures; so the measures, or *proofs*, whereby a man is led to the perception of truth, or to the knowledge of those different things in themselves, or, as they are related to one another, are equally *different*, and must necessarily be so, as they immediately arise from the *different nature* of the things themselves. And indeed the attempt would be extremely foolish, to go about to explain the truth of a thing, by that kind of proof with which the nature of the thing itself has no sort of connection: Nor is it less absurd to demand, in any case, that sort of proof, which the nature of things will not admit of. The real knowledge of mankind, and of every intelligent being, lies wholly in the perception of things themselves, which every body will confess, can only be apprehended by those means that are suited to their nature. Now, the things or existences, whose several properties, relations and agreements, are the objects of our knowledge, and beyond which we can know nothing, may be reduced to these two general heads.

First, There are such things, whose *inward nature* is in no degree *precarious*, depending on will and pleasure, but in itself is *fixed* and stable, immutable, absolutely independent, and whose truth and certainty, whose real existence, every mind capable of apprehending it, may, at *all times*, and in *all places*, perceive and understand. Of this sort I reckon *geometrical truths*, the *moral virtues*, and the *being and perfections of the Deity*: In discovering the truth

truth of which, as to *the two first*, we look immediately into the things themselves, we perceive their essential properties and relations, and are infallibly certain about their agreements; and as to *the last*, viz. the *existence of God*, we here indeed come to the knowledge of this truth by attending to the world about us, these finite dependent beings, which, we are absolutely sure, must be the effects of divine power, wisdom and goodness; but in another world, there is reason to think, we shall have immediate vision or intuition.

In the *next place*, there are such things, whose natures have *nothing in them of necessity*, and which for their existence, their properties and affections, do entirely *depend on the will of other beings*: Of this sort I reckon all the several things of this visible world, that are the free productions of the sovereign Mind; and all the particular actions or effects of inferior voluntary agents. And in acquiring the knowledge of such things, the most direct and immediate way is, *that of the testimony of our senses*. Thus our senses assure us of a vast variety of creatures in heaven and in earth; they discover to us the vicissitudes of day and night, of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest; they distinguish the individuals of our own species, and they let us know what particular actions *this* or *that* man is the author of. But as to things of this sort, how extremely scanty should our knowledge be, had we no other way to acquire it? Going no farther than the immediate testimony of our senses, no man could know that this world was existing before he observed it; nor could we be certain there now is, or ever was, any more of this earth; or that it now is, or ever was any further inhabited, than this small spot of ground with which we are acquainted.

All

All mankind therefore, who, with respect to things under the sun, pretend to know any more than those few articles, of the truth of which their senses immediately inform them, must necessarily allow, *there is some other way* than the immediate testimony of our senses, whereby we can come to the certain knowledge of those things whose existence *depends* on the will and pleasure of other beings. And since this knowledge cannot possibly arise from our looking into the nature of the things themselves, as we do in the case of *geometrical* existences, &c. whose nature and properties are independent, absolutely necessary, and must therefore appear in all ages, and in all places, unalterably the same ; the only remaining way seems to be that of the information, or *testimony* of other intelligent beings, upon whose truth and veracity we can safely rely.

Thus from the information of others, we know and rest assured, that this world, in its present situation, or under the direction of the same general laws that produce day and night, &c. has subsisted for so many ages past, and has, all along, been inhabited by such particular kinds of animals, whereof the individuals have been continually succeeding to one another : After the same manner we certainly know, that, besides this island of *Britain*, there are, at this day, in the earth, a great many other islands, and vast continents, all inhabited ; that are divided in distinct states and kingdoms, and whose forms of government, whose laws and customs, in many instances, do all differ from one another : And thus, likewise, we are persuaded beyond doubting, that such particular persons did live, and such others are now living in the world, and were the authors of such particular actions.

It

It is from this source, I mean, from the *testimony* of others, that, with respect to this sort of things, whose existence depends on the free will of other active beings, our greatest stock of knowledge arises: And altho' it cannot be universally affirmed, that, in every article, we may depend safely on *human testimony*; yet this no more renders our knowledge, founded on such proofs, uncertain or precarious, than a man's being led, in the use of his *rational faculties*, into a particular opinion contradictory to reason, or to the nature of things, can render our knowledge, arising from reason, or the nature of things, a matter of mere uncertainty. Such is the constitution of human nature, or, by such principles are all mankind governed, that, in numberless instances, we can be absolutely sure of the truth of things, from the information or testimony of other people. We regard it as an undoubted truth, that just now there is such a nation as the kingdom of *France*, where the present prince is *Lewis XV.* whose will, in the public administration, is subject to no controul: And, as fully do we rest assured, that, in the city of *Rome*, still subsisting, and now the seat of *Popes*, there was, about MDCCC. years ago, an Emperor called *Augustus*; who, in the battle of *Azium*, overthrew *Anthony*; who, oftner than once, shut up the temple of *Janus*; and who, for many years, peaceably enjoyed the sovereign dominion of a great part of the world. About the certainty of such things we are as much satisfied, as about any proposition in *Euclid*. " So many circumstances, says *Mr. Toland*, frequently concur in history, as render it equal to intuation: " Thus, says he, I can as soon deny my own being, as the murder of *Cicero*, or the story of

" *William*

"*William the Conqueror* *." And indeed all mankind rely on human testimony ; we venture our lives and fortunes upon it ; in our own experience we find ourselves safe in trusting it ; our stock of knowledge would be extremely poor and inconsiderable, nay, in nowise could mankind live associated without it.

Now, upon this sort of certainty, *universally depended on*, and in this its influence, absolutely necessary for the subsistence of human society in any form whatsoever, do we rest assured of the truth of the *gospel-bistory*, namely, *that*, so many ages ago, there were in the world such persons as *Jesus Christ* and his *Apostles*; *that* they taught such particular doctrines; *that* they wrought such extraordinary works; *that* Jesus Christ was *crucified at Jerusalem*; *that* his Apostles confidently reported, *he rose again from the dead*, and *ascended into heaven*; *that* in testifying this his resurrection, and ascension, and in publishing his doctrines, beginning at *Jerusalem*, they went through the world, and every where *suffered the greatest hardships, and cruellest persecutions*, pretending, that in this ministry, they were *employed by heaven*. These, I say, are the things, as to the certainty of which we are fully satisfied from human testimony. And as the nature of the things themselves cannot possibly suffer their truth, or the reality of their existence, to be made out after any other manner; so those persons, who demand *that* sort of proof that is founded in the independent absolute *necessity* of the existence, the properties, and affections of things, are most unreasonable, and would be gratified in what the *nature* of things renders simply impossible: Which is so far from thinking freely, and as it becomes a reasonable being,

that

* Christianity not mysterious, p. 128.

that it is thinking most absurdly, and in clean contradiction to that universal standard, whereby all our thoughts and sentiments ought entirely to be directed, and without our attending to which, we can never hope, in any instance, to discover truth, or to arrive at certainty.

Nor can a man justify his refusing to admit the truth of the things above mentioned, in alledging, that those things being made the *foundation* of a religious institution, upon which we are to venture our happiness in another world, they become of *too great* consequence to have their certainty depending on *human* testimony. For, the question is not about the importance of the things, but about their truth and reality; *whether* there were in the world such persons, and *whether* those persons were the authors of such actions? If these articles be counted of importance, our inquiries into their certainty ought to be the exacter, the more strict and rigorous, without all bias or prejudice: And if, after a diligent and narrow search, they are still found to be true, they must, *in reason*, be allowed to operate according to their nature.

Mean while, to pretend, that such articles, whose existence can no otherways be explained, are too considerable to depend for their certainty on human testimony, seems to intimate, that, in ascertaining the truth of the particular articles of such a determined *class* of things, we must have one species of proofs for those of *smaller*, and another sort of proofs for those of *greater* consequence. But, would it not be ridiculous to insinuate, that, with the same sort of eyes, whereby I distinguish a piece of dirty way, as I am travelling, that would soil my shoes, I cannot distinguish a precipice that would break my neck, but must have other sort of evidence? And

is

is it not equally extravagant, to alledge, that, by the same sort of evidence, whereby the *Deists* are well assured, *there* was such a person as *Socrates*, *that* he taught such doctrines, and suffered such a death at *Atbens*; we cannot rest satisfied, *there* was such a person as *Jesus Christ*, *that* he taught such doctrines, *that* he suffered such a death at *Jerusalem*, *that* his *Disciples* reported he rose again the third day after his crucifixion, &c.? Whatever, therefore, be the moment of the things, if the reality of their existence be made out by *that* sort of proof, which alone the particular nature of *that class* of things will admit of, no man can reject their certainty without being highly unreasonable. “*All possible matters of fact*, says Mr. Toland, *duly attested by coevoous persons, as known to them, and successively related by others of different times, nations, or interests, who could neither be imposed upon themselves, nor be justly suspected of combining together to deceive others, ought to be received by us for as certain and indubitable as if we had seen them with our own eyes, or heard them with our own ears.* By this means it is, continues this noted author, I believe there was such a city as *Carthage*, such a Reformer as *Luther*, and that there is such a kingdom as *Poland*. When all these rules concur in any matter of fact, I take it then for demonstration, which is nothing else but *irrefmissible evidence from proper proofs**.” And, that the several articles of the *gospel-history*, above mentioned, are supported by such proofs as make us as certain about their reality, as we possibly can be about the truth of any thing of the like nature, suppose the murder of *Cicero*, or the story of *William the Conqueror*,

* Christianity not mysterious, p. 17.

Conqueror, which Mr. Toland has told us, he can “no more deny than his own being,” is, to every thinking man, incontestibly manifest.

Nor is it less manifest, that this certainty, concerning the real existence of such persons and actions as are mentioned in the Gospel, (supposing the original history, with its coeval circumstances, as we now have it, had been transmitted down to us) we should have had, even tho’ the Christian institution had expired with the Apostles, and there were not now one Christian in the world. In this case, indeed, we should have had a ready proof, in spite of all the historical appearances to the contrary, that the Apostles, in pretending a commission from Heaven, were either Impostors, or Enthusiasts; but that such persons existed, were the authors of such actions, and had reported such events, could never be called in question. At the same time, I am apt to think, that Christianity still subsisting heightens our certainty (I do not now say, as to the divinity of that institution, but) as to the real existence of such persons, and their having taught, and performed, and reported such things in the world (a). Let us view the matter in this

VOL. I. B light,

(a) Θεούματα ἐργάζεται, ἡ πρόσεγε τὰς τῶν μετρού ὑπερ χρόνοις ἐνβιομένων. [particularly, τὰς δικυρίης χρήστον ἀπάσοντο πόδεςβειας κατεχομένης, Επὶ τάντη τῇ πέτρᾳ σικεδομήσω με τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, ἡ πύκια ἄστεις κατεχόντοι τῆς] διὰ μὲν τὸν τότε γῆπερναν τὴν ἀνθεῖαν τῶν μετρών χρόνοις ἐνβιομένων ἐγγυώμενος πάρα τοῖς τότε ἀνροσταῖς, τοῖς τε μετρα τάντα ἐπομένοις ἐν τῷ εἰρημένῳ ἐνβάσιον ἀγιότητα δεκτοῦ, ἡ τὰ ἐνεκποντῶν χρήσιν γεγενέμενα θεούματα, ἡ ἀπὸ τῆς διπλῆς τάντης ἀποδείξεως ἡ τὰ περὶ τῆς βασιλείας πιστύμενος. Chrysost. Demonst. quod Christus sit Deus, oper. tom. vi. p. 634.

light, which I shall explain with all the clearness I am able.

In fact, it is certain, that just now in the world, there are infinite numbers of people professing Christianity ; That this is the public religion of nations, and has the countenance and protection of civil authority. There is indeed, among Christians, a great variety of sects, that have each of them their own peculiar opinions and sentiments, and that differ from one another in their religious rites and ceremonies. But what differences soever may prevail in the Christian world about other matters, in this they are all agreed, That the history of the Gospel is, in all instances, true and genuine ; and they universally observe certain rites, such as Baptism, the Eucharist, and the Lord's day, as memorials of some very considerable events. In Baptism, the initiating rite, we renounce every other religious institution, we undertake the profession of Christianity, and we devote ourselves, thro' Jesus Christ, to the *only true God* and Father of all, to serve him *without fear*, according to the Gospel of his Son, *in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life* : In the Eucharist, we commemorate the crucifixion of Jesus Christ at Jerusalem, praising the name of God for his great salvation : And on the first day of the week, the day on which Christ is said to have risen from the dead, we joyfully assemble together to celebrate his resurrection. All this is real matter of fact, we have it from the information of our senses. And the question is, To what sensible cause must these sensible effects be ascribed ? Or, How came this profession of Christianity, or the observation of such stated solemn rites, to be introduced into the world ? No man living can imagine, that these things had their rise in the present age. We are infallibly certain, that they

they prevailed among our forefathers of the former age. And, if we still go backwards from one age to another, the same evidence by which we are assured that this, or any other part of the world where Christianity now prevails, was inhabited, and, in such an age, was governed by such particular laws, civil or religious, will convince us, that those things were all along existing, till we come to that age, wherein there was no such thing as Christianity, but religious institutions of a quite contrary nature. Thus, in tracing out the rise of this *Phænomenon*, beginning at the present age,

From one certain step to another, founded on the public laws, the unquestionable customs of particular kingdoms, we are led to the undoubted knowledge of the existence of Christianity in those more distant ages, when a considerable part of the world was under the dominion of the Roman Emperors; and running up our inquiries thro' the reigns of those Emperors, we meet with so many of them not only professing themselves Christians, but, by their public laws and edicts, protecting and encouraging that institution (b); till we are interrupted in the reign of Julian, who pursued other measures, and revived the public profession of Idolatry, as we learn from *Ammianus Marcellinus* (c), who lived in those

days;

(b) This was the state of things in the short reign of Jovian, immediately before we come up to that of Julian: Οἴα γὰρ αὐτὸς ἐπεισῆλθε τῇ τοῦ βασιλέως σφραγῖ; στυροὶ μὲν ὡς κατὰ τὸν θεόν δημητυρύντες. — νέων δὲ ὡς μὲν κατεκαρποσάν, ὡς δὲ οὐ μιτίλεσοι γέλως ἴσασι Χριστιανοῖς τοῖς μιαροῖς. Liban. Parental. in Julian. cap. 14. 8.

(c) Lib. 22. p. 476. G.

days; from *Eutropius* (*d*), who served in that expedition wherein *Julian* was killed; and from *Libanius* (*e*), who seems to claim the merit of promoting this Emperor's passion for Paganism. And not only did *Julian* endeavour to support the cause of the gods, and to gain proselytes to their service, by his authority and example, by solicitation and bribes; but, for the same purpose, he wrote a large Treatise, wherein, *Libanius* tells us, he goes about to show, that those Books which make the man of *Palestine* to be God, and the Son of God, contain nothing but things silly and ridiculous (*f*); so that, by the same evidence whereby we know there was such a person as the Emperor *Julian*, we are assured there was, among men, such a religion as the Christian, which, in his time, prevailed in the world, and which he had formed a design to extirpate.

But carrying on our inquiries still backwards, (as *Libanius* gives us ground to expect, while he compares the reign of *Julian* to a pure beam of light, but the times immediately before and after him to thick darkness (*g*); and tells us, that this Emperor opened the temples, and restored the altars of the

gods;

(*d*) "Nimius religionis Christianæ insectator: perinde tamen ut crux abstineret." Lib. 10. cap. 16. What the moderate Heathen understood by Julian's being *nimius insectator*, we learn from Am. Marcellinus: "Illud autem inclemens obruendum perenni silentio, quod arcebat docere Magistros, Rhetoricos et Grammaticos, ritus Christiani cultores." Lib. 22. p. 480. P.

(*e*) De ulciscend. Juliani nece, cap. 22.

(*f*) Επιδέμενος τοῖς βίβλοις, ἃς τὸ εἰς Παλαιόν τὸ θρώνον θέον τε καὶ θεῖα πάσι, μάχη τε μακρῆ, καὶ ἐλέγχων ἰχνῆ γέλωτα ἀποφήνας τὰ λεγόμενα, σοφώτερος εἰς τοῖς αὐτοῖς δίδεικτο τῷ Τυρίῳ γέροντος. Liban. Parental. in Julian. cap. 87.

(*g*) Ibid. cap. 146.

gods (*b*); we come up to two Emperors, the immediate predecessors of Julian, viz. Constantine and his father Constantine, who were both of them Christians, and, by their public edicts, had afforded the civil protection to that institution. As for Constantine, he was the first Emperor who declared himself Christian, as Zosimus informs us (*i*); and who, by express

(*b*) Καὶ τὸς καὶ πρὸς ὑπάτους δὲ ἡτει παρὰ τῶν θεῶν σιγὴ τε ἢ βαμῶν χωρίς, καὶ γάρ ισαρ. ἀνέψηντο δὲ νέως τε ὁ τῆς Αἰγυπτίας, ἢ ὁ τῶν ἀλλών θεῶν. Ibid. cap. 54. 55. 60.

(*i*) The crimes which Zosimus would fasten upon Constantine are shown by other authors to be wrongfully charged. And as to the reason he assigns for this Emperor's conversion, it is far from being in any degree probable. Nor, among sinful mankind, can it be counted the disgrace, but the glory of the Christian institution, that to penitent offenders it promises the pardon of all sins, how black or hainous soever. So that wherein Zosimus would have Paganism to be preferable, it is infinitely inferior to the Gospel.

Ταῦτα συνεπισάμενος ἐαυτῷ (Constantinus) καὶ προσίτι γε
ὑρκῶν καταρροήσει, προσῆγε τοῖς ιερῶντος καθάροις τῶν πρα-
τημένων αὐτῶν. εἰποτερι δὲ ως καὶ παραδέδοται καθαρός τρό-
πος δυστεβίματα τηλικαῦτα καθάραι δυάρμενος. Αἰγυπτίος
τοις ἐξ Ιβρίας εἰς τὴν Ρώμην ἐλθὼν, καὶ ταῖς εἰς τὰ βασιλεῖα
γυναικὶ συγκρήτης γεόμενος, ἐπιτυχὼν τῷ Κωνσταντίνῳ πάσης ἀ-
μαρτίδος αἰτησίτην ἔναι τὴν τῶν Χριστιανῶν διεβεβακούσατο
δόξαν. καὶ τύτο ἔχει ἐπαγγελμα, τὸ τοὺς ἀστεβάς μεταλαμ-
βάνοντας αὐτῆς, τάπις ἀμαρτίας ἵξω παραχρῆμα καδίσα-
σθαι. δεξάμενος δὲ ῥαφ Κωνσταντίνη τὸν λόγον, καὶ ἀφεμένη μὲν
τῶν πατρίων, μεταχόντος δὲ ὡρὸν ὁ Αἰγυπτίος αὐτῷ μετεδίδει,
τῆς ἀστεβάς τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐποίησατο, τῶν μαρτικὸν ἔχειν εἴ-
νυσθαι. Zosim. lib. 2. p. 104.

Much after the same manner does Julian, in concluding his Cæsars, ridicule the Christian religion, and, in particular, its Sacrament of Baptism. But all such reflections are so many proofs of the history of the Gospel; which is the only thing I here have in view.

express laws, allowing to every man a liberty of conscience, became the gaurdian of Christianity in particular, and took the professors thereof into his special favour (*i*). So far did this Emperor distinguish the Christian religion, that whereas the first day of the week was universally obſerved by Christians as a festival in memory of the resurrection of Jesus (*k*), he commanded, that on that day, all over the *Roman* dominions, no courts of justice should be open, and no work, or any ſort of ſecular buſineſſ, except that of agriculture, ſhould any where be done: For which we have the ſame evidence, as there is for any other law of the *Roman* empire (*l*). This revolution in favour of Christianity, happened about 300 years after the birth of Christ, and immediately upon the back of a terrible perſecution, which began in the reign of *Diocletian*, and, for ſeveral years, had cruelly raged againſt the Christians. Hence we have certain knowledge, that the Gospel was in being before the days of *Constantine*, and that it could not be forged by the politicians of his reign, as an engine to ſerve the ends of civil government.

Nor were there wanting, a good way back from *Constantine*, ſome Heathen Emperors who had an high opinion of Chrift, and proved very favourable towards his diſciples. Thus, 100 years before *Constantine* turned Christian, *Alexander Severus*, had the image of Christ in his private chapel, and would have

(*i*) Euseb. H. Ecclesiast. lib. 10. cap. 5. &c.

(*k*) Id de vita Constant. lib. iv cap. 18.

(*l*) Omnes judices urbanæque plebes, et cunctarum artium otia venerabili die Solis quiescant. Ruri tamen positi agrorum culturæ libere licenterque inserviant: quoniam frequenter evenit, ut non aptius alio die frumenta fulcis, aut vineæ scrobibus, mandentur, ne occasione momenti pereat commoditas coelesti provifione concessa. C. 1. 3. de Feriis, tit. 12.

have built a temple to him, and admitted him among the gods; as *Adrian*, in the beginning of the second century, is said to have intended; had not the Priests, from their divinations, assured him, “it would turn all the world Christian, and cause the other temples to be deserted (*m*).” Nevertheless *Alexander* allowed Christians the free exercise of their religion, and public places for their worship (*n*). And how very acceptable the discipline and doctrine of the Christians must have been to this Emperor, one may learn from those two remarkable instances: It was the custom among Christians, before they ordained their Priests, to publish their names to the people, that they might

have

(*m*) Si facultas esset, matutinis horis in Larario suo (in quo et divos principes, sed optimos electos, et animas sanctiores, in quibus et Apollonium, et, quantum scriptor suorum temporum dicit, Christum, Abrahenum, et Orpheum, et hujuscemodi deos, habebat, ac majorum effigies) rem divinam faciebat. — Christo templum facere voluit, eumque inter Deos recipere; quod et *Adrianus* cogitasse fertur, qui templa in omnibus civitatibus sine simulacris jussicer fieri: quae hodie idcirco, quia non habent numina, dicuntur *Adriani*; quae ille ad hoc parasse dicebatur: sed prohibitus est ab iis qui consulentes sacra repererant omnes Christians futuros si id optato evenisset, et templa reliqua deserenda. *Lamprid.*, apud. *hist. Rom. scrip.* p. 349. *D.* p. 351. *E.*

For some time, in the reign of *Adrian*, the Christians were persecuted. But, after the apologies presented to him by *Quadratus* and *Aristides*, and some letters he received from the Governors of Provinces, shewing how unreasonable it was, that the Christians, without being accused of any crime, should be sacrificed to the mere clamours of the populace; this Emperor came to be very favourable, and wrote in particular, to *Minucius Fundanus* Proconsul of Asia, commanding, that “no Christian should be disturbed on account of his religion, and that whosoever accused them, without alledging any other crime against them, should be punished.” *Vid. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. 4. cap. 8, 9.*

(*n*) *Id. ibid. p. 347. G. 352. F.*

have access to make their objections; if they had any; this he judged so worthy of imitation, that he followed the same course in appointing the Governors of Provinces: And so much did he admire this common maxim among Christians, *Do not that to another, which you would not have another do to you;* that, in punishing offenders, he caused the common Cryer to proclaim it, and made inscriptions of it upon his own palace, and the public works and buildings (*b*).

But, as I have already hinted, Christianity was not always thus fortunate. Under the reigns of most of the Heathen Emperors, its professors were barbarously persecuted: Besides that several men of wit and learning keenly attacked it in the way of argument, and employed all their art to stop its progress, and ruin its credit in the world. And from both these events, we are furnished with abundant evidence for the truth of the Gospel-history.

It is certainly a great misfortune to the Christian cause, that the writings of those Heathen authors, who endeavoured either to *reason* or to *laugh* Christianity out of the world, are lost. But those fragments of theirs, which the Christians who opposed them,

(*b*) *Ubi aliquos volueret vel Rectores Provinciis dare, vel Praepositos facere, vel Procuratores (id est, Rationales) ordinare, nomina eorum proponebat, hortans populum, ut si quis quid haberet criminis, probaret manifestis rebus; si non probasset, subiret poenam capitii. Dicebatque grave esse, quum id Christiani et Judaei sacerdent in praedicandis Sacerdotibus qui ordinandi sunt, non fieri in Provinciarum Rectoribus, quibus et fortunae hominum committerentur et capita.* — *Clamabatque saepius, quod a quibusdam, sive Judaeis sive Christianis, audierat, et tenebat: idque per praeconem, quum aliquem emendaret, dici jubebat, "Quod tibi non vis, alteri ne feceris."* Quam sententiam usque adeo dilexit, ut et in palatio et publicis operibus praescribi jubaret. Id. ibid. p. 352. D. 353. D.

them, have transcribed in their writings, do plainly answer my purpose, as they pointedly inform us of so many matters of fact.

Thus the Emperor Julian, ambitious of the government only as it would enable him to restore the worship of the gods, in his books against the Christians, so far is he from denying the certainty of those articles, which I have above mentioned concerning Christ and his Apostles, that he admits them all as true and genuine. He takes notice of Jesus as the son of Mary, said to derive his being, not from Joseph, Mary's husband, but from the *Holy Ghost* (p) : He quotes several passages of the Old Testament, (some of which are transcribed in the New) held to be prophesies concerning the Messiah ; and, at the same time, would have Matthew and Luke to oppose one another in the genealogy of Jesus (q) : He mentions his being inrolled along with his father and mother in the *Census* under Cyrenius (r) : He speaks of his miracles, such as his having *power over spirits*, his *walking upon the sea*, his *casting out devils* (s) : And he tells us, that about 300 years a-

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go,

(p) Julian apud Cyril. lib. 8. p. 253. Oper. vol. vi. Chalcidius, a Platonic philosopher, (whether Heathen or Christian, learned men are not agreed ; nor will I presume to interpose) in his Commentary upon Plato's *Timaeus*, p. 219. speaks of the star that appeared at our Saviour's birth, after this manner : " *Est alia sanctior et venerabilior historia, quae perhibit ortu stellae cuiusdam, non morbos mortesque denunciatas, sed descensum Dei venerabilis ad humanae conservationis, rerumque mortuum gratiam : quam stellam cum nocturno itinere inspexissent Chaldaeorum profecto sapientes viri, et consideratione rerum coelestium satis eximii, quaesisse dicuntur recentem ortum Dei, repertaque illa maiestate puerili veneratos esse, et vota Deo tanto convenientia nuncupasse.*"

(q) Julian ubi supra, p. 252, 261, 262. (r) Ibid. lib. 6. p. 213. (s) Ibid.

go, in the reign of *Tiberius*, “ Jesus having gained
 “ a few followers, and those of the meanest or
 “ basest sort, however famous he might be among
 “ such people, yet in his lifetime he did nothing me-
 “ morable, unless one will reckon the curing the
 “ lame and the blind, and the relieving those that
 “ were possessed with devils, in the villages of *Beth-*
saida and *Bethany*, to be feats mighty and consider-
 “ able (t).” Nor does *Julian* neglect to quote some
 articles of the sayings and discourses of our Saviour
 as reported in the Gospels. Thus he observes, that
 one of Christ’s disciples having said unto him, *Lord,*
suffer me first to go and bury my father; Jesus said
 unto him, *Follow me, and let the dead bury their*
dead (u): That *Jesus the Nazarene* made these reflec-
 tions, *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,*
for you are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed
appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead
men’s bones and of all uncleanness (x): That he pro-
 fessed *he came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets,*
but to fulfil; assuring the world, that *whosoever shall*
break one of these least commandments, and shall teach
men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of
Heaven (y): That he gave out this command, *Go*
and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the
Father,

(t) Οἱ δὲ Ἰησοὶς αὐτεῖσας τὸ χείρισμον τῶν παρ’ ὑμῖν ὄλι-
 γος, πρὸς τοὺς τριάκοσίοις ἵναυτοῖς ὀνομάζεται, ἐργασάμενος
 παρ’ ὃν ἔην χρόνος ἥρους ὡδὲν ἀκοῆς ἀξιῶν, εἰ μή τις διέται
 τὰς κυλλὰς καὶ τυφλὰς ἴασκοθεῖ, καὶ δαιμονῶντας ἐφορχίζειν ἐν
 Βεθσαΐᾳ καὶ ἐν Βεθανίᾳ ταῖς κωμαῖς, τῶν μεγύσων ἥρους ἕναι,
 Ibid. p. 191. Επὶ Τιβερίῳ γὰρ ἦτοι Κλαυδίος ταῦτα ἐγένετο.
 Ibid. p. 206.

(u) Ibid. lib. 10. p. 235. (x) Ibid.

(y) Julian apud Cyril. lib. 10. p. 351.

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (z). These are so many particulars that relate immediately to *Jesus Christ*.

And as for his Apostles; whilst Julian would have them guilty of enchantments, and of teaching that black art to their followers, he confesses, not only that the Apostles wrought miracles themselves, but that they imparted the same power to others (a): He would have St. *Paul*, in particular, to be the greatest conjurer that ever was (b): He takes notice of *Peter's* vision in the Tanner's house, about abolishing the Jewish distinction of meats (c): He brings in several passages from the writings of St. *Paul* (d); such as *Rom.* iii. 29. x. 4. 1 *Cor.* vi. 9, 10, 11. He frequently remarks on St. *John's* doctrine, in the first chapter of his Gospel, concerning the divinity of *Christ*; his making all things, &c. on which occasion, he mentions so many of the Apostles particularly by name, viz. *Peter, Paul, Mark, John, Matthew, Luke* (e); whereof the

two

(z) *Ibid. lib. 9. p. 291.*

(a) Παλαιὸν τὸν τετοῦ τοῖς Ισδαίοις τῆς μαγγανέιας τὸ ἔργον, ἐγκάθιδεν τοῖς μημάσιν, ἐνυπνίῳ χάριν. οὐδὲν καὶ τὸς Αποσόλους ὑμῶν εἶκός εἴναι μετὰ τὸν τὸ σιδωσκάν τελευτὴν ἐπιτίθεντας, ὅμηρον τε εὖ ἀρχῆς παραδίδοντας τοῖς πρώτοις πεπιστεύσοις, καὶ τεχνικώτερον ὑμῶν αὐτοὶ μαγγανεῦσαι, τοῖς δὲ μεταυτέρας αποδεῖξαι δημοσίᾳ τῆς μαγγανέιας ταῦτα καὶ βεβεντίας τὰ ἐργαστήρια. *Id. ibid. lib. 10. p. 339.*

(b) Τὸν πάντας πανταχῶς τὸν πώποτε γόνος καὶ ἀπατῶντας ὑπερβαλλόμενον Πάνχον. *Ibid. lib. 3. p. 100.*

(c) *Ibid. lib. 9. p. 314.* (d) *Ibid. lib. 3. p. 106. lib. 7. p. 245. lib. 9. p. 320.* (e) *Ibid. lib. 6. p. 213. lib. 8. p. 262. lib. 10. p. 327, 333.* Amelius, a Platonic philosopher, long before Julian, seems to bear witness to the truth of St. *John's* Gospel, while he assures us, “as he should answer to Jove,” that a

Barbarian

two last, he elsewhere proposes the *Galileans* should explain in their churches, rather than go about to teach those Heathen authors, whose writings they condemned (f). And laying hold of every thing which he thought might discredit the Christian institution,

Barbarian (by whom he plainly means this Apostle) is clearly of opinion, That the *Logos* was with God, in the rank and dignity of a *Principle*; and was God: That by him all things whatsoever were made: That what was made, was in him enlivened, and life, and real being: That he descended into a body; and being clothed with flesh, appeared as a man; giving proofs, at the same time, of the greatness and excellency of his nature: in short, That, upon his dissolution, he was again exalted, and became God, such as he was before his assuming of human nature. *Ibid.* lib. 8. p. 283. D. Vid. *Theodoret Therapeut.* *serm.* 2. p. 500. I shall transcribe the passage from *Eusebius*:

*Kai οὗτος ἄρα ἦν ὁ Λόγος καὶ δὲ αἱ τὰ γινόμενα ἔγενετο, ως ἂν καὶ ὁ Ἡράκλειος αἰσιώσῃ, καὶ τὸ Δί, ὃ δὲ ὁ Βαρύβαρος αἴσιοι εἰ τὴ τῆς ἀρχῆς τάξει, τε καὶ αἴσια καθεδηκότα πρὸς Θεὸν εἶναι, καὶ θεὸν εἶναι. δι' ἐκ πάντων ἀπλῶς γεγενῆσθαι. ἐν ὧ τὸ γεγόμενον, ζῷον, καὶ ζῷον, καὶ ὃν πεφυκένας καὶ εἰς τὰ σῶματα (εἰς τὸ σῶμα, *Theod.*) πίπτειν, καὶ σάρκα ἐνδυσάμενον φαντάζεινθαι ἀνθρώποι, μετά καὶ τὴν τηνικαῦτα δεικνύειν τῆς φύσεως τὸ μεγαλεῖον. ἀμέλει καὶ ἀγαλαζίητα πάλιν αἰποδεῦσας, καὶ θεὸν εἶναι, διος ἦν πρὸ τοῦ εἰς τὸ σῶμα, καὶ τὸν σάρκα, καὶ τὸν ἀνθρώποι καταχθῆναι.* *Praep. Evang.* lib. 11. cap. 19.

St. John's phrase, *ἐν αὐτῷ ζῷον ἦν*, Amelius takes to signify *Plato's Ideas*; for he explains it thus, *ἐν ὧ τὸ γεγόμενον, ζῷον, καὶ ζῷον, καὶ ὃν πεφυκένας*. Translators do not seem to have understood this sentence of Amelius: I have here given what I apprehend to be its true meaning. Vid. *Necess. of Revelation*, p. 303. *marg.* About *Plato's Ideas*.

Augustin likewise reports, that a certain Platonist (perhaps Amelius: if another, so much the better) openly professed, that this passage of St. John deserved to be written in letters of gold. *De Civ. Dei*, lib. 10. cap. 29.

(g) Julian. epist. 42.

stitution, he upbraids Jesus and his Apostles with the meannels of their followers; and among the converts to Christianity mentions *Cornelius* and *Sergius* (g).

In short, apprehending that the doctrines of the Gospel do in no degree authorize a persecuting spirit, he severely checks the Christians of his time, in telling them that their cruelties and persecutions against the Heathen, and against those of their own party, who only differed with them in their sentiments about the *dead Man* (b), had no other cause but their private passions; since for such doings they had received no command, either from Jesus or from Paul (i). But whatever was the spirit of his days,

(g) Apud Cyril. lib. 6. p. 206.

(b) Having just now observed, that Chalcidius reports, as real fact, the *phanomenon* that appeared at our Saviour's birth; I cannot but likewise remark, that the darkness and earthquake, which the Gospels tell us happened at the crucifixion, are as little doubted by Phlegon the Trallian, an Heathen, and freeman to Adrian; who, as we learn from Eusebius, in his Chron. and others, give this account of the matter:

Τῶ δ' ἔτει τῆς ΣΒ ὀλυμπίδος ἐγένετο ἔκλεψις ὥλη μεγίστη τῶν ἐγκαρισμένων πρότερων. Καὶ τοῦ ὥρα σ' τῆς ἡμέρας ἐγένετο, ὅτε καὶ αἱέρας ἐν ὄχριῳ φανήσαι. Σεισμὸς τε μέγας κατὰ Βιθυνίαν γενόμενος, τὰ πολλὰ Νικάδιας κατέβρεψε. Vid. Orig. in tract. 35. ad Matt. et cont. Cels. lib. 2. p. 80. The same Phlegon confesses, that our Saviour had the knowledge of future events, and that what he foretold, did actually come to pass: From whence (according to Origen, in his 2d B. p. 69. against Celsus) he seems forced to allow, "There is something of divinity in "the Gospel."

(i) Ζηλεῖτε δὲ αὐτῶν τὰς θυμὺς καὶ τὰν πικρίαν, ἀνατρέποντες Ἱερὰ καὶ βωμὸς, καὶ ἀπεσφάξατε ωχήμων μόνον τὰς τοῖς πατρώος ἐμμένοντας, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἐξισης ὑμῖν πεπλαγμένων αἱρετικῶν, τὰς μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ὑμῖν τὸν γερρὸν θρηνούτας. ἀλλὰ ταῦτα ὑμέτερα μᾶλλον εἰσὶν ὥδαμην γαρ οὐτε Ιησοῦς αὐτὰ παρέδωκε κελέωντας ὑμῖν, οὐτε Παῦλος. Apud Cyril. lib. 6. p. 205.

and however he accuses the Christian institution of being incapable of deriving any real goodness or excellency to human nature (*k*) ; yet elsewhere he lets us know, That, in former times, the holy lives, the charity and kind offices of Christians, exercised, without distinction, towards the Heathen, as well as their own brethren, in relieving the poor, in succouring strangers, and burying the dead, had mightily conducted to establish and propagate the Gospel : Upon which he warmly recommends it to his own Priests, as they value the interests of the gods, to be zealous in the pursuit of the same virtues. "The gods," says he, "have vouchsafed us far greater things than could have been expected. For, in so short a space of time, who durst have looked for so wonderful a revolution ? But why do we count those things sufficient, and do not rather attend to what especially has augmented the impiety, namely, their humanity towards strangers, their pious care in burying the dead, and their seeming holiness of life ? It is a shame that those impious *Gaulians*, should not only provide their own, but our poor (*l*)."¹ From *Gregory Nazianzen* we likewise understand, that *Julian* insulted over Christians in their calamities, jeering them upon their precepts about contemning the world, and living above it, the patiently bearing, the forgiving, and the not resenting of injuries, such as are frequent in the Gospel (*m*). To conclude, the Emperor informs us, That, in the days of St. John, great multitudes, in many cities of *Greece* and *Italy*, had embraced the religion

(*k*) *Ibid. lib. 7. p. 229.*

(*l*) *Epist. 49. p. 429. Oper. vid. p. 305. Fragm. et Sozomen. lib. 5. cap. 10.* (*m*) *Greg. Naz. adv. Julian. orat. 3. p. 94.*

religion of Jesus; which he is pleased to call *a dis-temper wherewithal people were seized* (*n*).

Thus far Julian, who had inclination, skill, and power, sufficient to have detected a forgery, had there been any such thing in the Christian religion; and who would not have failed, had he found it, to have exposed it to all mankind: Thus far, I say, the Emperor Julian supports the credit of the Evangelical history. But, before his time, we find the same good service done the Gospel by Hierocles.

This other writer against Christianity, who is said to have excited *Diocletian* to the persecution he raised against the Christians, and to have been very active himself in carrying it on, has so little thought of denying there was such a person as *Jesus Christ*, or that he wrought miracles, such as restoring sight to the blind, and other miracles of the like nature, that he confesses the truth of the whole, and only means to expose the Christians for thinking so highly, on that account, of *Jesus*, whilst, in his opinion, *Apollonius* wrought greater miracles; “and yet,” says he “we do not esteem him a god, but only a man greatly favoured of the gods (*o*).” After the same manner does *Porphyry*, who was earlier in the controversy

(*n*) *Apud. Cyril. lib. 10. p. 327.*

(*o*) Αγω δὲ καὶ κάτω Θρυλλῶσι, σεμνυνόντες τοῦ Ιησοῦ, ὡς τυφλοῖς ἀναβλέψαι τε παραχόντα, καὶ τινὰ τοιῶντα δράσαντα θαυμάσια:—Αλλ' ἐπὶ τῶν προγόνων ἡμῶν κατὰ τὴν Νέρωνος βασιλείαν, Απολάνιος ἥκμασεν ὁ Τυανεὺς, — πολλὰ καὶ θαυμαῖς διεπράξατο:—ἡμεῖς μὲν τὸν τοιῶντα πεποικότα καὶ θεόν, αλλὰ θεοῖς κεχαριτωμένον ἄνδρα ηγύμενα: οἱ δὲ δι' ὅλιγας τερατειας τινὰς τὸν Ιησοῦν θεόν ἀγαγορέντοι. Hierocl. apud Euseb. p. 512.

controversy than *Hierocles*, bear witness to the truth of things reported in the Gospel.

And here, with as great sincerity as any Infidel can do, and I am confident with far better reason, I lament the loss of *Porphyry's* books against the Christian revelation. Those Gentlemen, indeed, are pleased to reproach Christians, as if they had designedly destroyed all those books that were writ by Heathen authors in opposition to the Gospel. But why then did Christians go about to answer those books, and in their answers transcribe, at least, all the most considerable objections? Nay, *Origen*, whose learning, *Porphyry* tells us, was in his time mightily celebrated, "could not bear to let any thing pass unexamined that was advanced by Infidels (p)." And with respect to *Celsus*, (the first who published a formal treatise against the Christian revelation, and who, no doubt, brought together all the objections he was able either to form himself, or to collect from other people,) "That we may not seem," says *Origen*, "designedly to pass over any particular article, as unable to refute it, we have determined, without observing the natural order and connection of things, to follow him in the method he pursues in his book, and to answer every one of his objections (q)." And as this was the conduct of antient Christians, in their defence of Christianity, what good reason have our modern Infidels to charge Christians with the guilt of stifling and burning the books of their antient brethren? One should think that the answering the books of Infidels so very particularly, is a strong proof that Christians meant, that all the objections made by Infidels should be preserved, that they should

(p) *Origen. cont. Cels. lib. p. 22.* (q) *Id. ibid. 31.*

should be spread abroad in the age when they happened, and handed down to posterity. I confess it as a matter of shame and indignation, that the Emperor *Constantine*, in one of his letters, gives the world ground to suspect, that *Porphyry's* books had been attacked in a very unrighteous manner, and suffered violence (r). But we know, that, after *Constantine's* time, those books were answered by *Apollinaris*, that they were in the hands of *Libanius*, and that St. *Jerom*, who went into the other world about an hundred years after the writing of that letter of *Constantine*, had perused those books, and was designing likewise to have writ against them. Nor do we hear of any books published in antient times against Christianity that have not been answered. And beyond question, whatever Christian otherwise attempted the destruction of those books, he must have been so far, not only blindly passionate and imprudent, but very ignorant of those measures whereby one can rationally defend the truth of our holy religion. But what wonder is it, that a few such particular books have been lost in those almost general wrecks that have happened in the republic of letters? It is owing to the prodigious industry and application of many learned men, that so many antient books have been recovered. And had those books against Christianity been still existing, I am apt to think, they would not have greatly relieved our Infidels. In the very little one has access to know concerning *Porphyry's* books, this, to any considerate man, cannot but appear evident.

Of those books *Libanius* gives us a sort of general character, when he tells us, that *Julian* managed

(r) Apud Socrat. Hist. Eccl. lib. cap. 9.

the argument against Christians with greater strength of reason, and to better advantage, than *Porphyry*: For speaking of *Julian's* books, whereof we still have the most considerable passages, he expressly says, “That the Emperor has shown himself a more “knowing, and a more able reasoner than the old “venerable Tyrian (s).” Now we have already seen that *Julian* makes no exception to the truth of the Gospel-history, but, on the contrary, proceeds upon its authenticity. Had *Porphyry*, therefore, pursued the argument in the manner wherein the Deists would have the world to suspect he did, I mean, had he objected to the truth of the history of the Gospel, and made it appear, that the whole, or any fundamental branch of it, is a meer forgery; as therein he would have at once overturned the whole system of Christianity; it is impossible that in this argument *Libanius* could have given the preference to *Julian*, who regards the history in a quite contrary light, and whose reasoning on that account, even supposing it just, must have fallen infinitely short of the force of *Porphyry's*. In a word, had *Porphyry* attacked the authenticity of the Gospel-history, and in any measure made good his argument, as no argument could have more effectually ruined the credit of the Christian institution, *Julian*, who came after him, would not have failed to have pursued it to its utmost extent. Nay, doubtless, had there been any foundation for it, every Heathen engaged in the controversy would have employed it as an invincible argument, wherein they could not but have triumphed over all their adversaries. But where is the least evidence of any thing of this nature? One may therefore reasonably presume, that *Porphyry*, without making any objection of this kind, did,

as

(s) *Liban.* Parental. in *Julian*. cap. 87.

as well as other Heathens before and after him, argue upon the Gospel-history as genuine and authentic.

Again; It would seem, that people of curiosity did sometimes consult the Oracle concerning certain persons of fame and distinction, wanting to be informed as to their real character. Thus *Chærephon* consulted the Oracle in relation to *Socrates* (*t*). An address of the like nature was made to the Oracle in the case of *Plotinus* (*u*). And thus likewise the Oracle was consulted concerning *Jesus Christ*; “Whether he was a God, and how he came to be punished, or to suffer death as a malefactor?” Here therefore the Oracle having declared, that “*Christ* was a person of the greatest sanctity, and that “his soul, after death, was taken up into heaven;” upon this *Porphyry* very piously interposes this very wholesome injunction, not unworthy the regard of our modern Infidels, “Thou shalt not (says “he) blaspheme *Christ*, or speak reproachfully of “him, but pity the weakness and folly of those “men who worship him (*x*).” And, as *Porphyry* apprehended,

(*t*) Xenoph. Apol. pro Socrat. p. 703. (*u*) Porph. de vita Plot. cap. 22.

(*x*) Παράδοξον ἵσως δόξειεν ἄγ τισιν ἔναι τὸ μέλλον λέγεσθαι
ὑφ' ἡμῶν τὸν γὰρ Χριστὸν οἱ Θεοὶ εὐσεβέσατος ἀπεφίναντο καὶ
ἀδάνοτον γεγονότα, εὐφήμως τε αὐτῷ μημονέυσοτ — περὶ
γὰν Χριστὸν ἐρωτησάντων, εἰ ἴσι Θεός, φησίν.

‘Οτῇ μὲν ἀδανάτῳ ψυχὴ μετὰ σῶμα προβαίνει,
Γιγνώσκει σοφιῇ τετιμημένος ἀλλάγε ψυχὴ
Ανέρος εὐσεβίᾳ προφερεσάτῃ ἐσὶν ἐκεῖνῳ’

εὐσεβέσατος ἄρα ἐφη αὐτὸν, καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῆς, καθαπέρ καὶ

apprehended, that the distinguishing honours offered to *Jesus Christ*, was the reason why *Aesculapius* and the other gods had abandoned their care of mankind (*y*) ; it is no wonder that he was highly incensed, and wrote with great virulence against the professors of Christianity. However, thus far there is nothing inconsistent with the Gospel-history ; *Porphyry* testifies, “ *Jesus Christ* was a righteous person, of great uprightness and integrity ; he suffered death as a malefactor, but died innocent, and is now exalted into heaven.”

But further ; As it is, upon good reason, the common opinion, that *Philostratus* wrote the life of *Apollonius Tyanaeus*, on purpose to raise up a character that might prove a rival to *Jesus Christ*, and thereby prevent the world from being so forward in renouncing the worship of the gods, and embracing the religion of *Jesus* ; so the same design, one cannot but observe, is carried on by *Porphyry* and his scholar *Jamblicus*, who in the life, which each of them wrote,

τῶν ἀλλων, μετὰ θάρατον ἀπαθανατισθῆναι, ὃν σέβειν ἀγοῦσταις τὰς Χριστιανὰς. Επερωτάντων δὲ σία τι ἐκολάσθη, ἔχριστεν

Σῶμα μὲν ἀνθρακέσσιν βασάνους ἀλις προβέβληται
Ψυχὴ δὲ εὔτεβέων εἰς ὄφαρον πέδον οἴεται.

— ἀντὸς γάρ εὐσεβῆς, οὐδὲ εἰς ὄφαρος, ὥσπερ δι έυσεβεῖς, χωρίσας· ὅσε τούτον μὲν ὑβρασθημέσεις, ἐλεῖσεις δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὴν ἀνοίαν. Porph. de Philosoph. ex Oracul. apud Euseb. Demonst. Evangel. p. 134.

(*y*) Νῦν δὲ θαυμάζοτον εἰς τοσάτων ἔτῶν κατέληψε τὸν πόλιν ή νόσος, Ασκλαπίον μὲν ἐπιδημίας η τῶν ἀλλων θεῶν μηκέτ' ὄπις. Ιπσὸς γάρ τιμωμένος, ὑδεμιᾶς τις θεῶν δημοσιᾶς ὠφελεῖσκες ποθετο. Porph. and Euseb. Praep. Evang. lib. 5. cap. i. p. 179. Vid. Theodoret. Serap. serm. 12. in. fin.

wrote, of *Pythagoras*, represent that Philosopher, with respect to his original, the sanctity of his life, the purity of his doctrines, and the greatness of his miracles, in such a manner, that the competition is very obvious (z) : And indeed the preference seems to be given to *Pythagoras*, whilst *Porphry* assures us, that “ no man can be conceived to have done “ more wonderful things, and in greater number (a).” Now, as *Porphry*, in my apprehension, means to equal or prefer the miracles of *Pythagoras* to the miracles of *Jesus*, it cannot well be imagined, nay, it would be grossly absurd to imagine, that *Porphry* held the miracles of *Jesus* to be meer delusion or imposture. I confess it appears from St. *Jerom*, that *Porphry* called the Christian miracles *dæmonum præstigias, the charms or feats of dæmons*. But this is nothing to the prejudice of their reality. Under the same notion he represents the miracles of *Pythagoras*, of whose reality he had no doubt, when he tells us, that “ by magical charms and incantations “ *Pythagoras* relieved people of their bodily dis-“ eases (b).” For the Heathen, (whom the Papists in many instances like to imitate) were of opinion, that in matters of religion the correspondence betwixt heaven and earth, the gods and mankind, was carried on by *Dæmons*; and, in particular, that by their

(z) Προδέις τε ὅτι ἐπὶ θεραπείᾳ καὶ ἐνεπνοΐᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πάντων καὶ διὰ τύτο ἀνθρώπομορφος ἵνα ξενιζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ ὑπερέχον ταρίξονται, καὶ τὴν παρ' αὐτῷ μάδην ἀποφεύγωσιν. Jambl. de vit. Pythag. cap. 19. § 92.

(a) Porph. de vit. Pythag. p. 28.

(b) Καμνοτας δὲ τα σώματα ἐθεραπεύει, καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς δὲ γοσῆτας παρεμυθεῖτο, καθάπερ ἔφαμεν, τας μὲν ἐπωδαῖς καὶ μαγεῖαις, τας δὲ μυσικῆς ἵνα γαρ αὐτῷ μέλι καὶ πρὸς νόοντας σωμάτων παιώνια, αἱ ἐπάδων ἀρισταὶ τὰς καμνοτας. Porph. de vit. Pythag. § 33.

their intervention miracles were worked, calling the art or power of working them *Magic* (c). So that *Porphyry*, in calling the miracles of *Jesus*, *the feats of daemons*, no more doubts of their reality, than he doubted of the reality of the miracles of *Pythagoras*; or than the *Jews* doubted of the reality of the miracles of *Jesus*, when they ascribed them to the power of *Beelzebub*: Inasmuch therefore as *Porphyry* regards the miracles of *Jesus* as things really performed, he must here likewise be understood to attest the truth of the Gospel-history. To this let me add (what appears from a passage, out of his third book against Christians, preserved by *Eusebius*) that so far as it concerns the doctrines of the Gospel, *Porphyry* does not seem to make any exception, but only complains of the expounders of the Scriptures, particularly of *Origen*, that “ tho’ they lived according to the Christian institution, and in contradiction to the public laws, yet, in their sentiments concerning the Deity and the nature and existence of things, they followed the Greek philosophy, and employed the Grecian learning in supporting foreign and extraneous fables;” plainly

(c) Πᾶν τὸ δαιμόνιον μεταξύ ἐσι θεῦ τε καὶ θυτῶ—ιρμηνεῦνον καὶ διαπορθμεῦνον θεοῖς τὰ παρ’ ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ἀνθρώποις τὰ παρὰ θεῶν, τῶν μὲν τὰς δέσσεις καὶ θυσίας, τῶν δὲ τὰς ἐπιτάξεις τε καὶ ἀμοιβὰς τῶν θυσιῶν. ἐν μέσῳ δὲ ὁ ἀμφοτέρων συμπληροῦ, ὥστε τὸ πᾶν ἀντῶ ἀντῶ ξυριδεότας διὰ τέτε, καὶ οὐ μάρτικὴ πᾶσα χώρει, καὶ οὐ τῶν ιερέων τέχνη, τῶν τε περὶ τὰς θυσίας καὶ τὰς τελετὰς καὶ τὰς ἐπωδὰς, καὶ τὴν μαρτίειαν πᾶσαν καὶ γοντείαν θεοῖς δὲ ἀνθρώπων καὶ μίγνυται, ἀλλὰ διὰ τέτε πᾶσα ἐσιν οὐ δημιύτια, καὶ οὐ διάλεκτος θεοῖς πρὸς ἀνθρώπους, καὶ ἔγρηγοροσι καταίνειν. Plat. in conviv. p. 202. per Daemonias—cuncta denunciata et Magorum varia miracula, omnesque præfigiorum species reguntur.

ly meaning their allegorical explanations of the holy Scriptures (*d*).

But we are unfortunate, not only in the loss of *Porphyry's* books, but in the loss of those particular answers that were made to them by *Methodius*, *Eusebius*, and *Apollinaris*. However, by collecting together some few scraps which elsewhere we meet withal, one may further judge how he stood affected to the Gospel-history. And, in general, we learn from *Theodoret*, that, with a design to show the world that such a composition of things cannot be thought to have come from God, *Porphyry* assiduously applied himself to the reading of the Scriptures (*e*). But, as he found no fault with the doctrines, which he owns consonant to the Greek philosophy, all his objections must have been pointed at some particular facts or circumstances, which, in his opinion, might be sufficient to shew, that the writers of the New Testament vainly pretended a commission from Heaven to instruct mankind. Thus, upon *Matth.* xiv. 25, 26. where it is reported, that *Jesus walked on the sea*, *Porphyry* remarks, that, in order to impose a miracle upon ignorant people, the Evangelist gives the name of *a sea* to the Lake of *Genesareth*. And with respect to our Saviour's going

(*d*) *Porph. apud. Euseb. hist. Ecclesiast. lib. 6. cap. 19.*
Comme Origène avoit beaucoup d'érudition, il fit paraître, dans ses Commentaires sur l'Ecriture, qu'il étoit également savant dans l'étude des Livres Sacrés, & des Auteurs profanes ; il aimoit sur tout les allégories, non seulement parce qu'il avoit lu les ouvrages des Philosophes Platoniciens ; mais aussi parce qu'il crut relever par ce moyen l'Ecriture Sainte, qui paraissait simple aux Payens. Ce n'est pas qu'il n'estimât beaucoup le sens littérale de la Bible ; mais il jugea que l'allégorie seroit plus utile pour attirer les savans de ces temps-là à la religion Chrétienne, P. Sim. Hist. Critic. de Vet. Test. lib. 3. cap. 6.

(*e*) *Theodoret. Therap. serm. 7.*

going up to Jerusalem to the feast of Tabernacles, as it is related *John* vii. 8, 10. he alledges, “Christ was here guilty of being fickle and inconstant;” or, from the Evangelist’s account of the matter, he is liable to that imputation. He takes notice too of the death of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, as they are reported *Act*s v. 5, 9, 10. and he imputes those events to some cruel revengeful imprecations of *Peter*. And upon *Gal.* ii. 2. &c. where we are told that *Paul* *withstood Peter to the face*, he represents these two Apostles engaged in a childish dispute, and that *Paul*, envious of *Peter*’s reputation, betrayed an insolent forwardness in reprehending him (*f*). Thus *Porphyry*, as *Eusebius* observes, taking exception at none of the doctrines, does in other instances calumniate or misrepresent the Scriptures (*g*). And we see, that in every article, so far from denying, he goes upon the truth of the history. I shall only further observe, that in the life of *Plotinus*, *Porphyry* lets us know, there were at that time, about the middle of the third century, a great many Christians in *Rome*, where his master *Plotinus* then was (*h*).

The next writer against Christianity I shall mention, is *Celsus*, who seems to have flourished about an hundred years after the crucifixion of *Jesus*. And that this author, in his reasoning, does likewise proceed upon the supposition of the truth of the history of the Gospel, is manifest from those passages of his,

(*f*) These several passages are taken from *Hieronym.* *Quaest. Hebraic.* *Genef.* sub init. lib. 2. adver. *Lag* p. 864. ep. 8. ad *Demetr.* *de Virg.* *Serv.* p. 74. proaem. 1. *Comment* in *Gal.* *Vid.* cap. ii. et xi. epist. 89. ad *Augustin.*

(*g*) Μηδὲ μηδεμῶς φάντοι ἔγκλημα τοῖς δούγμασι ἐπιβαῖνει δυνατεῖς αὐτορίᾳ λόγων, ἐπὶ τῷ ποιδοπέντε τρέπεται. *Euseb.* *Hist. Eccles.* lib. 6. cap. 19.

† *Porph.* *de vita Plotin.* cap. 16.

his, which *Origen* has transcribed in his books against him. In particular, he takes notice of these articles which we find recorded in the Gospel, and that are still professed by Christians, namely, that *Jesus* came down from heaven (*g*) ; that he was supernaturally born of a Virgin in a village of *Judea* ; that this Virgin's husband was a Carpenter ; that they were admonished by an Angel to fly with the child into *Egypt* ; that he returned again from thence (*b*), and went about, thro' the land of *Judea*, attended with ten or eleven persons, Publicans and Fishers (*i*) ; that he taught moral doctrines against revenge, avarice, ambition, &c. such as are still extant in the Gospels (*k*) ; that he wrought miracles, such as curing the lame and the blind, raising the dead, feeding multitudes on a few loaves, &c. (*l*) ; that he was betrayed and forsaken by his disciples (*m*) ; that he was crucified along with two malefactors (*n*), in the dread of which he had thus addressed himself to Heaven, *Father*, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me (*o*) ; that as he had foretold his resurrection, so it was given out, he rose again from the dead, and appeared alive, not to the *Roman* Govern-

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or,

(*g*) *Orig. contra Cels.* lib. 4. p. 161. 162.

(*b*) *Ibid.* lib. 1. p. 22. 51. lib. 6. p. 325.

(*i*) *Ibid.* lib. 1. p. 47.

(*k*) *Ibid.* lib. 6. p. 286. lib. 7. p. 343, 370.

(*l*) *Ibid.* lib. 1. p. 53. lib. 2. p. 87, 89, 93.

(*m*) *Ibid.* lib. 2. p. 62.

(*n*) *Ibid.* lib. 2. p. 81. 85.

(*o*) Εἰ δέδοκτο ἀντῶ ταῦτα, καὶ τῷ πατρὶ χειθόμενος ἐκολάζετο δῆλον ὅτι θεῶ γε ὄντι, καὶ οὐλομένῳ, εἴ τοι ἀλγεῖναί τοι ἀνικάρα ἦν τὰ πατά γνωμένη χρώμενα——τοι διὰ ποτιστάς καὶ ὁδηρετάς, καὶ τὸν τὸν ὀλέθρον φόβον ἔυχεται παραδραμειν; λέπιγνωρώδει πάσι· ὡς Πάτερ εἰ δύναται τὸ ποτήριον τῦτο παρελθεῖν. *Ibid.* lib. 2. p. 75. *Vid. lib. 7. p. 367.*

or, nor to those who had insulted him, nor to all the people, but to his own Disciples (*p*) ; that this *Jesus*, some few years before *Celsus's* time, was the author or founder of the Christian institution ; and that his followers esteem and worship him as God, or the Son of God (*q*). All these, and many other particulars reported in the writings of the New Testament, has *Origen* transcribed from *Celsus*.

It is true, this enemy of the Gospel does not give out all these several articles as real matters of fact, nor as things that had actually happened. On the contrary, he would represent some of them as downright lies and forgeries, that deserve no credit among mankind. But however careful *Celsus* is to set every thing in such a light as may best answer his design of exposing Christianity ; yet, from the objections he makes against the truth of those particular facts he calls in question, one may easily perceive, that nothing is said that in any measure can lessen their certainty ; thus he tells us, it is a falsehood that *Jesus* foretold that *Judas* would betray him, and *Peter* deny him, as it actually came to pass ; for had they been thus forewarned, the premonition would have prevented both one and the other (*r*). As little, says he, can it be true, that

Jesus

(*p*) Orig. lib. 2. p. 93, 94, 98, 104.

(*q*) Ibid. lib. 1. p. 21. lib. 2. p. 87. lib. 8. p. 385.

(*r*) Πῶς ἐπεὶ προεῖπε καὶ τὸν προδόσοντα καὶ τὸν ἀρνητήν,
καὶ αὐτὸν ὡς θεόν ἐφοβίζησαν, ὡς τὸν μὲν μὴ προδέναι ἔτι,
τὸν δὲ μὴ ἀρνησασθαι ; — ἦδη γὰρ πάλιν καὶ ἄνθρωπος ἐπιβύλευό-
μενος τε καὶ προαισθόμενος, ἐπάν τοις ἐπιβύλευσθαι, ἀπο-
τρέπονται καὶ φυλάσσονται — ἐκ δὲ, ἐπειδὴ προείρητο, ταῦτα
γέγονεν ἀδύνατον γάρ ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ γέγονε, ψεῦδος ἐλέγχεται
τὸ προειρηκέναι πάντη γάρ ἀμύχανον τὰς προακύσαντας ἔτι
προδέναι καὶ ἀρνητασθαι . Id. ibid. lib. 2. p. 71, 72.

Jesus foretold his own death; for had he foreseen it, he would, no doubt, have done what he could to avoid it, and not voluntarily exposed himself (*s*). Nor, in his opinion, did *Jesus* by a divine power work miracles: Those wonderful things he performed were only, as he apprehends, the effects of Magic which he had learned in *Egypt* (*t*). And as to his resurrection; what man, says *Celsus*, really dead, did ever arise with the same body? Or the man who was unable to help himself when alive, how could he return to life again, and shew the marks of his punishment, the wounds he had received in his pierced hands? This article therefore, as he would have it, is a meer fiction, and those who pretend to have been eye-witnesses, must be held, at least, intirely visionary (*u*). After this manner, to pointed matters of fact, possible in their own nature, and attested by known witnesses, does *Celsus* oppose empty speculation. And his finding nothing else to object, cannot but be counted a plain proof, that the truth of the Gospel-history is beyond all reasonable exception. In short, as *Origen* observes, *Celsus* admits the truth of those facts, which, he thinks, he can gloss to the discredit of the Christian institution, and pretends to reject those that would infer its divinity (*x*).

But be his conduct what it will, he affords us certain information, That, about such a time, there were

(*s*) Id. *ibid.* lib. 2. p. 67, 69, 71.

(*t*) Οὗτος διὰ πενίας εἰς Αἴγυπτον μισθωρίσας, κακοῖς δυνάμεσι τινῶν πειραθεὶς, ἐφ' ὃς οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι σεμινύονται, ἐπανῆλθεν ἐν ταῖς δυνάμεσι μέγα φρονῶν, καὶ διὰ αὐτὰς θεὸν αὐτὸν αἰνιγόρευοντες. *Orig. ibid.* lib. 1. p. 22, 30. *Vid. p. 53. lib. 2.* p. 89. &c.

(*u*) Id. *ibid.* lib. 2. p. 93, 94.

(*x*) Id. *ibid.* lib. 1. p. 49.

were such persons in the world as *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles ; that they taught such moral doctrines ; that they wrought such miracles, or did many things out of the ordinary course of nature, which he therefore attributes to their skill in Magic ; that *Jesus* was crucified ; that it was confidently reported, he rose again from the dead ; that a religious sect of men was formed in the world, upon the principles delivered by *Jesus* : And, I say, these particular articles, besides many others, being, by *Celsus's* own confession, undoubted matters of fact, are sufficient to my present purpose, as they clearly support the credibility of the history of the Gospel.

To this learned Philosopher, let me now add his friend and contemporary *Lucian*, who, after his way, goes about to render the Gospel ridiculous. And this witty author informs us, that *that great Man*, whom the Christians still continue to worship, was crucified in *Palestine*, for introducing that new sect of religion (y) : That his followers are taught to believe, that after they have renounced the service of the gods, and have come to worship that *crucified Sophist*, and to live according to his laws, they are then all brethren ; That their care to succour and relieve one another, when persecuted for their religion, is incredible ; That in such circumstances, they spare nothing, but have every thing in common, despising all hardships, dangers of every sort, even death itself, in hopes of immortality (z). This is what *Lucian* reports in his account of the death of *Peregrinus*, whom, he tells us, the Priests in *Palestine*

(y) Τὸν μέγαν γῆν ἐκεῖνον ἔτι σέβουσι ἀνθρώποι, τὸν εἰ τὴ Παλαισίην ἀναπολοπίσθεντα, ὅτι καὶ νῦν ταύτην τελετὴν εἰσῆγαν εἰς τὸν βίον. *Lucian. de morte Peregrin.* p. 566.

(z) *Ibid.* p. 567.

leftine had instructed in the Christian religion (*a*). And in his *Philofratis* (*b*), introducing *Triphon* in the character of a Christian, he makes him inform *Critias*, that we ought to swear by “that God who “reigns on high, who is great, immortal, above “in heaven; by the Son of the Father; and by “the Spirit proceeding from the Father; one of “three, and three of one; those we ought to e-“steem the only true God (*c*):” That he must speak nothing reproachful of the *right-hand God*; plainly alluding to those passages of the New Testament, where *Christ* is said to be *exalted at the right-hand of God* (*d*): That, as for himself, he was formerly in the same wretched condition with *Critias*, till the bald-pated, big-nosed *Galilean*, who had been *caught up into the third heavens*, where he heard things most charming and excellent, happening to meet with him, had renewed him by *water*, meaning *Baptism* (*e*); had put him in the way towards the blessed, and

(*a*) *Ibid.* p. 565.

(*b*) Some are of opinion, particularly *Huetius*, that this Dialogue is not *Lucian's*, but the production of an earlier writer. And if that be the case, we are brought nearer to the time of our Saviour, and have another witness in favour of the truth of his history.

(*c*) Καὶ τίνα ἐπωμόσωμαι γε; Τυφομέδοττα Θεὸν, μέγαν, ἀμβροτον, υρατίωνα: οὐδὲ πατρὸς πνεῦμα ἐκ πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον ἐν τριῶν, καὶ εἰς ἵνας τρία ταῦτα νόμισε Ζηνα, τὸν δῆγον Θεὸν. *Lucian. Philopatr.* p. 770. *Vid. p. 774.*

(*d*) *Id. ibid.* p. 773.

(*e*) *Arrianus* (whose master *Epictetus* had it in his power to see at Rome, in the reign of *Nero*, the Apostles *Peter* and *Paul*) speaks of baptized persons, whom he calls *Jews*, but who, from this circumstance of *Baptism*, must at the same time be reckoned Christians; and tells the world, that after such a manner are those persons affected, that in their conduct of life they are always consistent, ever steady to their principles: So that in his days, when

and redeemed him from the place of the ungodly (*f*): That God from heaven beholds the just and the unjust, and writes down in books all their actions, to requite every man *on that day he hath appointed*: That forasmuch as *Christ* is come to the Gentiles, what passes in *Scythia*, in any part of the world whatever, is likewise thus recorded (*g*): That we ought to begin our prayers with the Father (*b*); seeming to point at the Lord's prayer: And both *Triphon* and *Critias* allude to St. Paul's explication of the inscription at *Athens*, *To the unknown God, whom*

when a man's practice did not correspond with his profession or character, the common saying was, "He is not a Jew (a Christian) but a dissembler."

"Οταν τινὰ ἐπαμφοτερίζοντα ἔιδωμεν, εἰώθαμεν λέγειν, ωκ
ἔσιν Ιudeῖος, ἀλλ' υποχρίντας ὅταν δὲ ἀγαλάβη τὸ πάθος τὸ
τὴν βεβαύμένην καὶ ηρημένην, τότε καὶ ἔσι τῷ ἄντι καὶ καλέσται Ιudeῖος
ὢτω καὶ ημεῖς παραβαπτίσαι, λόγω μὲν Ιudeῖοι, ἔργω
δὲ ἄλλο τι, ασυμπαθεῖς πρὸς τὸν λόγον. Arrian. Epist. lib. 2.
cap. 9. sub. fin. This common opinion about the steady adherence of Christians to their profession and character, is mentioned by Pliny in his famous letter to Trajan: "Quorum (says he)
" nihil cogi posse dicuntur, qui sunt revera Christiani." And as Christianity had its rise in Judea, and was at first propagated by those of that nation; this seems to have led the Heathen to regard Christians as a Jewish sect, and frequently to give them the name of Jews. Thus they are called by Dio Cassius, in the passage transcribed below. But Galen seems to express what might be thought their full denomination, when he calls them, as we shall see immediately, "the Disciples of Moses and of Christ."

(*f*) Ibid. (*g*) Ibid. p. 771, 773.

(*b*) "Εαυτον τυτες, τὴν ἐυχὴν ἀπὸ Πατρὸς ἀρξάμενος, καὶ
τὴν πολυώνυμον φῶντα ἐπιδειξεις Ibid. p. 779. This
hint of Lucian's, about a multinominal Ode, gives us to understand, that in the primitive church the custom was, to conclude their prayers with an hymn or Doxology. Vid. Const. Apost.
lib. 8. cap. 12.

whom they now conceive to be discovered (*i*). From *Lucian* we likewise learn, that the Christians were extremely obnoxious to the public *odium*; that they were grievously reproached, being held equally impious with Atheists and Epicureans, and together with them excommunicated from the public mysteries (*k*).

Thus the most eager writers against Christianity, who had some of them access to converse with those who had seen and heard the Apostles, afford us ample proof, that Christians were in being more than 1700 years ago; and that their original history, related in the New Testament, can be no forged composition of a later age. But while some laid out their wit, to reason, or to banter Christianity out of the world; others were employed to suppress it, by the barbarous arguments of fire and sword, by all the cruelties of persecution. And from hence likewise we

(*i*) Νὶ τὸν "Αγνωστον ἐν Αθίναις." — Ήμεῖς δ' τὸν ἐν Αθίναις "Αγνωστον ἐφευρόντες, καὶ προσκυνήσαντες, χεῖρας εἰς ψράντον ἔκπειναντες, τάτῳ ἐνχαρισθόμενοι." *Ibid.* p. 769, 780.

(*k*) Some persons of integrity and prudence going about to expose Alexander's imposture, he complains, "Αδέων ἐμπεπληθαί
καὶ Χριστιανῶν τὸν Πόντον, οἱ περὶ αὐτῷ τολμῶσι τὰ κάκια
βλασφημεῖν. Οὓς ἕκιλεντες λίθοις ἐλάσνειν, ἔργε ἐδέλνοντι ὥλεω ἐ-
χειν τὸν Θεὸν. And having instituted mysteries that were to be
celebrated for three days, ἐν μὲν τῇ πρωτῃ, πρόρρησις ἦν, ὥσ-
περ Αθηνῶν, τοιάντη. "Εἰ τις ἄδεος, οὐ Χριστιανός, οὐ Επικύ-
ρεῖος, οὐκει κατάσκοπος τῶν ὄργιών, φευγέτω· οἱ δὲ πιστεύοντες
τῷ Θεῷ, τελείσθωσαν τύχη τῇ ἀγαθῇ. εἴτ' ἐνθύς ἐν ἀρχῇ
ἐζέλασις ἐγύγνετο· καὶ οὐ μὲν ἡγεῖτο λέγων, "Εξω Χριστιανὸς· τὸ
δὲ πλῆθος ἐπεφθέγγετο, "Εξω Επικυρεῖος." Then went on the
mysteries, wherein was represented the fable of Latona's bringing
forth Apollo, &c. and Alexander's own amours with the moon.
Lucian. Pseudmant. p. 762, 770.

we are led to the certain knowledge of the existence of Christianity, and to perceive the truth of the history of the Gospel.

Libanius informs us, that in order to recover people from their attachment to the Christian religion, the Emperor *Julian* not only gave the world a fine example, in his devotion towards the Gods, Heroes, Heaven, Æther, Earth, Sea, Fountains, Rivers (*l*) ; but he endeavoured to engage people to return to Heathenism, by reason and argument, by banter and ridicule ; and, when these could not prevail, he made use of money to persuade them. And such gentle means this Emperor employed, not only from his apprehending that a man's conscience cannot be forced, but from his being sensible, that the cruelties which, before his time, had been exercised, had rather furthered than hindered the progress of Christianity. So that *Libanius* here gives us to understand, that in former reigns, meaning those before *Constantine*, Christians, for the sake of their religion, by a variety of torments, whereof he gives some instances, had been cruelly harassed and persecuted (*m*).

And, indeed, if we look back into the situation of mankind during those reigns, the case will appear, as *Libanius* reports it, not only under the worst, but under those they reckon their best Emperors. Nor does the case seem to have happened seldom, since, long before *Libanius*, *Ulpian* the great *Roman* lawyer, who flourished in the beginning of the third century, took up no less than seven books in collecting

(*l*) Οὐκ ἴθεράπεντε μεγαλοπρεπῶς Θεοὺς, "Ηρωὰς, Οὐρανὸν, Αἰθέρα, Γῆν, Θάλατταν, Πηγὰς, Ποταμύς;" ὥκ τὸπολεμικόσιν; Liban. Parental. in Julian. cap. 144. Vid. *Aelian*. var. hist. lib. 2. cap. 33. lib. 12. cap. 61.

(*m*) Ibid. cap. 58, 59. 81. What is here said against persecution, may put many Christians to the blush.

lecting the Imperial edicts, which, before his time, had been made against Christians (*n*). Thus the tranquillity of the world, with respect to matters of religion, was disturbed, and the Professors of Christianity came to be hardly used and persecuted in the reign of *M. Antoninus Philosophus*. And so remarkably firm and resolute were Christians in adhering to their faith, and in suffering every thing for the sake of it, that not only the Emperor himself takes notice of it, whilst, in his *Meditations*, he esteems it mere obstinacy, and cautions the world against it (*o*) ; but *Celsus* too seems to have in his eye the behaviour

(*n*) Domitius de officio Proconsulis, libris septem Rescripta Principum nefaria collegit, ut doceret, quibus poenis affici oportet eos, qui se cultores Dei confiterentur. Lactan. Inst. lib. 5. cap. 11.

(*o*) Οὐδὲ εἰνὶ ἡ φυχὴ ἡ ἔτοιμος, εἰὰν ἥδη ἀπολυθῆναι, δέν τὸ σώματος, καὶ ἡ τοι σβεδῆναι, ἡ σκεδασθῆναι, ἡ συμμεῖναι; τὸ δὲ ἴτοιμο τότε, ἵνα ἀπὸ ιδίους χριστεως ἐρχηται, μὴ κατὰ φιλον παράταξιν, ως οἱ Χριστιανοὶ, ἀλλὰ λεχογισμένοις, καὶ σεμνῶς, καὶ ὡσε καὶ ἄλλοι πεῖσαι, ἀτραγάδως. M. Anton. lib. xi. § 3.

This Emperor came at length to be very indulgent towards Christians. Justin Martyr's Apology did not indeed save his own life, or put a stop to the persecuting of others. But Melito addressed the Emperor in another apology : And many Governors of Provinces having writ to him concerning the Christians ; such, it seems, were the accounts he received, that, in his Rescripts, following the moderate measures which his father Antoninus Pius came in time to observe, he gave command, that " no Christian, " without being guilty of a crime against the Government, should " be disturbed." And when this was found insufficient to restrain the malice of their enemies, he caused publish an edict in the common Council of Asia, " That those who should be accused as Christians, without having any other crime laid against them, shall be acquitted from the charge, and the accusers punished." Vid. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. 4. cap. 13. Eusebius is mistaken in making Antoninus Pius the author of this Letter.

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behaviour of Christians in this persecution, whilst he upbraids them with absurdity, in setting so great a value on their bodies, as to expect for them a resurrection ; and yet, at the same time, to be throwing them away in sufferings, as if they were things vile and contemptible : Withal, he tells them, that their hopes of any sort are extremely ill founded ; for so little was God concerned in their interest, that “ they were dragged out of their concealments, and “ brought to the hands of the executioner (*p.*) .” Nor was it any thing else but their unshaken constancy amidst persecutions, that gave occasion to the renowned *Galen*, who was now flourishing, and must therefore have been a witness of their sufferings, to mark out the steadiness of Christians in their profession, as a pitch of obstinacy wholly impregnable ; while he says, “ One may sooner prevail with the followers of *Christ* to change their “ principles, than with those Physicians and Philosophers who are engaged in sects (*q.*) .”

But looking still backwards beyond the days of this Emperor, into those of *Trajan*, who came into the world about twenty years after the death of our Lord ; in his reign we shall likewise find that Christians were involved, merely on account of their religion, in a very severe persecution. Of this we have abundant proof from *Pliny*, who was himself concerned as an agent in the matter. This *Roman*

We have an account of Melito's Apology presented to Antoninus Philosopher, and of the particular cities to which Antoninus Pius sent his Rescripts in favour of the Christians. Euseb. lib. sup. cap. 26.

(*p.*) Orig. contr. Cels. lib. 8. p. 409, 423.

(*q.*) Θαύλος γὰρ ἦν τις τὸς ἀπὸ Μωϋσὲς καὶ Χρηστοῦ μεταδιάδειν, ἢ τὰς ταῖς αἱρέσεσι προσετηκότας ιατρὺς τε καὶ φιλοσόφος. Gal. de Pulsuum different. lib. 3.

man Senator, when Governor of *Bitbynia*, in his *Letter to Trajan*, a most valuable piece of antiquity, tells the Emperor, That “the temples and altars of “the gods were every where, in town and country, “almost totally deserted.” From whence we learn, that within the compass of a few years the Gospel must have made a wonderful progress. At the same time *Pliny* reports, that among those that were accused, and whom he had examined, there were some who confessed they had been Christians, but that twenty years ago they had forsaken that profession; avowing, however, that the height of their crime was, their being wont, on a stated day, before it was light, to assemble together, in order “to sing a Psalm to *Christ* as God, and to bind “themselves by a Sacrament to commit no wickedness (r).”

Thus we see what were the principles and practice of Christians so many years before, and at the time of *Trajan's* persecution, which happened about seventy years after our Lord's passion. And, no doubt, *Pliny* had good information about those particular matters of fact, upon which the Christians founded

(r) *Plin. lib. 10. Epist. 97.* This I shall have occasion to transcribe afterwards. Here, since it likewise shews us the being and situation of Christianity at that time, I shall insert *Trajan's* answer to *Pliny*.

“Actum quem debuisti, mi Secunde, in excutiendis causis eorum, qui Christiani ad te delati fuerant, sequutus es. Neque enim in universum aliquid, quod quasi certam formam habeat, constitui potest. Conquerendi non sunt: Si deserantur et arguantur, puniendi sunt: Ita tamen ut qui negaverit se Christianum esse, idque re ipsa manifestum fecerit, id est, supplicando diis nostris, quamvis suspectus in praeteritum fuerit, veniam ex poenitentia impetrat. Sine auctore vero propositi libelli, nullo crimine locum habere debent. Nam et pessimi exempli, nec nostri faeculi est.” *Ibid. Epist. 98. Vid. Tertull. Apolog. cap. 2.*

sounded their profession. His uncle, the elder *Pliny*, a learned man, and mighty inquisitive, was about ten years old when our Saviour was crucified, and about forty when the Christians were persecuted under *Nero*; so that, having adopted his nephew, and held the direction of his education till he was about seventeen years of age, it cannot well be thought but he informed him concerning that sect, which was still continuing to make a considerable noise in the world, and could not therefore, at that time, but frequently prove the subject of common conversation. And, not to mention the other opportunities which *Pliny* himself had at *Rome*, to learn the history of the Christian religion, and how much his curiosity must have been awakened, particularly, after his uncle's death, during *Domitian*'s persecution, which cut off and banished great numbers of people, and even those of the highest rank, such as *Flavius Clemens*, who, in the time of his Consulship, was put to death; and his wife *Domitilla*, nearly related, as well as her husband, to *Domitian*, who was banished; to whom *Dio* adds *Glabrio*, a person of Consular dignity, who was likewise capitally punished (5); I say, not to mention *Pliny*'s other oportunities, and how much such events must have awakened his curiosity; when he was in his government of *Bitbynia*

(5) Καν τῷ ἀτῷ ἔτει ἄλλος τε πολλὸς καὶ τὸν Φάβιον Κλήμητα ὑπατέουστα, καὶ περ ἀνέψιον ὅντα, καὶ γυραικα καὶ αὐτὴν συγγενῆ ἐκεῖτε Φλαβίαν Δομιτίλλαν ἔχοντα, κατένφαξεν ὁ Δομιτιανὸς ἐπηρέχθη δὲ ἀμφοῖν ἔγκλημα ἀδεότητος· υφὲ τῆς καὶ ἄλλοι εἰς τὰ τῶν Ιουδαίων ἥδη ἐξοκέλλοντες πολλοὶ κατεδιάσθησαν· καὶ οἱ μὲν απεισάγον, οἱ δὲ τῶν γεννώντων ἐσερήθησαν· οἱ δὲ Δομιτίλλα οὐπερωρίσθη μόνον εἰς Παιδατέρειαν· τὸν δὲ δὴ Γλαβρίωνα τὸν μετὰ τὸν Τραϊανὸν ἀρέσκατα, κατηγορηθέντα τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ δια οἱ πολλοὶ—ἀπέκτεινεν· Dio Cass. lib. 67. Xiphil. in Domitian. p. 236. D.

nia (among the Eastern Churches, where there were infinite numbers of Christians) and was there, in good earnest, attempting to check the progress of Christianity; he seems to have had access to the fairest means of information. For, not to speak of other Christians in those parts, who must have seen and conversed with the Apostles (which we know was the case of *Polycarp* in particular, at that time Bishop of *Smyrna*, and universally famous) and were therefore capable to afford one a clear account of the history of our Saviour: It is to be observed, that among the strangers to whom St. Peter writes his two Epistles, those of *Bithynia* are particularly mentioned. And as from some circumstances in those Epistles, there is reason to apprehend, that this Apostle travelled into all those several parts, whither he sent his letters; so from Ecclesiastical Writers we understand, that as in others, so he was certainly in the Province of *Bithynia* (*t*): Where *Silvanus* a faithful brother, who carried the first Epistle, must unquestionably have been; and where likewise the Apostle St. *Andrew*, and the Evangelist St. *Luke*, are said to have preached the Gospel. So that those very persons who told *Pliny*, that twenty years ago they had renounced Christianity, may reasonably be counted among those who saw and conversed with the first publishers of the Gospel. Besides, that St. *Luke* spending the last of his days, as it is reported, in *Bithynia*; neither he nor St. *Andrew* came to be martyred till *Domitian's* persecution: The severity of which, it is highly probable, tempted those *Bithynians* to prove Apostates. Such, I say, were the means of information which *Pliny* had access to pursue. Nor did he fail to make a narrow scrutiny; nay,

(*t*) Πέτρος δὲ πολλάκις Ποντού τε καὶ Βιθυνίαν ἐπεσκέψατο
Epiph. adv. Haeres. lib. 1. tom. 2. p. 107.

nay, he proceeded to the most rigorous inquisition possible; and yet, after all his endeavours to get to the bottom of the matter, being able to discover no forgery, no criminal design of any sort, he was contented to regard the whole as an extravagant superstition, in which, for their stubborn inflexible obstinacy, he thought Christians justly deserved punishment. *Neque enim dubitabam, says he, qualemque esset quod faterentur, pervicaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri.*

But, at some distance back from this, within about thirty years of the crucifixion of our Saviour, there happened under *Nero* a most cruel persecution mentioned by *Suetonius* (*u*) ; but whereof we have a more particular account from his contemporary *Tacitus*, who seems to have been about fifteen years of age at the death of *Nero*, and must therefore be counted an eye-witness of this persecution, and might have seen and conversed with the Apostles *Peter* and *Paul*, who therein, at *Rome*, suffered martyrdom. And from this celebrated Historian we understand, not only what were the horrid cruelties, the dreadful torments, amidst which the poor Christians were then barbarously put to death, but that their numbers in *Rome* were at that time very considerable (*x*). Now this bringing us very near to the time when *Jesus* was crucified ; I shall conclude this branch

(*u*) In *Nero*, cap. 16.

(*x*) As from those great numbers of Christians then in the city of *Rome*, one is led to apprehend that Christianity must have had a being before the days of *Nero*: So going on from his reign, and coming immediately up to that of *Claudius*, who succeeded in the empire in the eighth year after the crucifixion ; we find there were likewise Christians in *Rome* during the reign of this Emperor. For, as *Suetonius* informs us, “ *Claudius banished the Jews from Rome, because of the disturbances they were continually* ”

branch of the evidence with the account of things which Tacitus gives us, when he is about to explain this persecution under Nero. And this Historian expressly reports, That Christianity had its rise in *Judea* ;

" continually making under the instigation of Christ;" i. e. from their different sentiments concerning him. " *Judaeos, impulso Chresto, assidue tumultuantes Roma expulit.*" In Claud. cap. 25.

I confess, some are of opinion, that this passage has no relation to Jesus Christ. It is this difference that makes me mention this testimony only in the margin. And I shall here give the reasons that induce me to understand it concerning our Saviour.

It is indeed certain, that Claudius banished from Rome only those of the Jewish nation; and that they were banished, not on any religious account whatsoever, but purely because of the continual tumults they were raising. It cannot however be denied, that at that time there were in Rome many Christians. This is evident from the vast numbers that were there in the reign of Nero, who came to the empire about two or three years after this banishment: It is evident from St. Paul's Epistle to the Saints, Jews and Gentiles, in Rome, whose faith was then spoken of throughout the whole world; and yet this Epistle was writ within six years after the Jews had been banished; so that before this time, as appears likewise from the contexture of the Epistle, and the particular salutations at the end of it, many of them must have returned to Rome: It is directly evident from Acts xviii. 2. where we learn, that this banishment brought from Rome to Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla, two Christians of a distinguished character. I say, therefore, one cannot well doubt but that in the reign of Claudius, there were in Rome many Christians of the Jewish nation. And, as I have hinted, we must here understand Sueton to inform us, that those disturbances among the Jews, which occasioned their being banished, had their rise from their different sentiments concerning Jesus Christ. This, I am sure, is in no degree improbable: Nay, as the Jews in Rome could not but have different sentiments, and as those sentiments could not but prove so violent as greatly to endanger the public peace, and, in the present article, no other cause of its disturbance can be assigned, it rather seems morally certain.

For, as it is reported by Justin Martyr and Eusebius, " The chief Priests and Rulers of the Jews, after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, wrote letters and dispatched messengers from Jerusalem

dea; That the professors of it had their name from Christ; That this Christ, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death by Pontius Pilate; and that this religion,

" Jerusalem every where thro' the world, in order to inform their countrymen of what had happened, and to guard them against favouring that new Atheistical sect which had arisen among them; reproaching the Christians with many things, and particularly with what St. Matthew has recorded, that his disciples stole away the dead body, and thereupon pretended he was risen from the dead, and had ascended into heaven."

Μετὰ δὲ τὸ σαυρωταὶ ὑμᾶς ἐκεῖνοι τὸν μόνον ἄμωμον ἀδρόπον — εἰπεῖδὴ ἐγράψατε αὐτὸν ἀνασάντα ἐκ νεκρῶν, καὶ ἀναβάντα εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν — ἀνδρας ἐκλεκτὸς ἀπὸ Ιερουσαλήμ ἐκλεξάμενοι τότε ἔξεπεμψάτε εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν, λέγοντες αἱρεσίν ἀθεού. Χριστιανῶν πεφυγέται, καταλέγοντες ταῦτα ἀπεικασθῆναι οἱ ἀγνοοῦστες ἡμᾶς πάντες λέγοντιν. Just. m. Dial. cum Tryph. p. 234. Vid. p. 335. Thus likewise Eusebius upon Isaiah xviii. 1. 2. Εὑρομενὲν τοῖς τῶν παλαιῶν συγγράμμασιν ὡς οἱ τὴν Ιερουσαλήμ ὀικύντες τὺς τῶν Ιudeίων ἔθνος ιερεῖς καὶ πρεσβύτεροι, γράμμata διαχαράζαντες εἰς πάντα διεπέμψαντο τὰ ἔθνη τοῖς ἀπανταχεῖ Ιudeίοις διαβάλλοντες τὴν Χριστὸν διδασκαλίαν ὡς ἀιρεσίν καινὴν καὶ αλλοτρίαν τῷ Θεῷ παρηγγελόν τε δι' ἐπιστολῶν μὴ παραδίξασθαι αὐτὴν.

Now, there is pretty good evidence, that at the time when the crucifixion happened in Jerusalem, there were many of the Jewish nation residing in Rome. We know for certain, that from the days of Cicero and Julius Cæsar, to those of Tiberius, there were great numbers of Jews inhabiting that city. (Vid. Cic. pro Flac. cap. 28. Suet. in Jul. Cæs. cap. 84.) And altho' in the reign of Tiberius, the Jews and their proselytes were banished from Rome, under the pain of becoming slaves. (Vid. Suet. in Tiber. cap. 36.) Yet since that Emperor, upon understanding the falseness of the crimes laid against them, immediately after the death of Sejanus, which happened, A. D. xxxi, was pleased so far to repair the wrong they had suffered, as to give them liberty to return. (Vid. Phil. de leg. ad Cai. p. 698.) There is no question but that, before the crucifixion of Jesus, they came again to be there very numerous. And as one cannot possibly imagine that

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gion, after the death of its Author, over-run not only *Judea*, but the city of *Rome* (y). Here, then,

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the chief priests neglected to send their letters or messengers to that imperial city where there were so many of their countrymen; so the Jews at Rome having received such notices concerning that new sect which had appeared in Jerusalem; those of them who zealously adhered to their national constitution, believing the information that was sent them, could not but conceive, as one may judge from the common temper of that people, a most inveterate malice against such of their brethren, and the proselytes to their religion, as should embrace Christianity, an impious plot, as they imagined, to overturn the whole structure of their nation and religion. And under such apprehensions, at first strongly impressed, and still kept alive or growing deeper by opposition, is it any wonder the Jews should prove tumultuous? How apt those people were to raise disturbances in foreign places from their opposition to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, one may learn from Acts xiv. xvii. xviii. And the moderation they observed towards St. Paul at Rome, while they said unto him, "We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came thewed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: For as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against, &c." Acts xxviii. 21. &c. I say, this calm moderate behaviour, so very different from their common temper and course of acting, seems in a great measure to have arisen from the memory of those troubles wherein they had involved themselves in the reign of Claudius, thro' their violence in opposing the Christian profession.

It is true, as Suetonius writes the name, he may seem to mean some other person than Christ. But both Greeks and Romans were in use to write the name of our Saviour. This appears from the quotation above transcribed from Galen: The same is evident from Lucian in his Philopatris et Catechumen, Αλλα μαι τοδε ειπει ει χριστων ει τω χριστω εγχαρακτησι; Παττα, ει τυχοι γε Χριστος χριστος. And says Lactantius, lib. 4. cap. 7. "Sed exponenda hujus nominis ratio est propter ignoranciam errorum, qui cum, immutata litera, Christum soleant dicere." Vid. Tertul. Apol. cap. 4. I cannot therefore but here profess, I see nothing to prevent our resting assured, that Suetonius,

(y) Tacit. Annal. lib. 15. cap. 44. These passages in Suetonius and Tacitus the Reader will find written out in Sect. xx.

Tacitus points out to us the place, the time, the Author, and first rise of Christianity. And certain it is, that, if we look farther back into the religious state of mankind, beyond the reign of *Tiberius*, we shall find nothing of Christianity, no vestige of any set of men, who, in their religious principles, opposed the superstition of the Jews, and the idolatry of the nations ; but both Jews and Gentiles were in peaceable possession of all their several religious sentiments.

I would only now observe, That, so late as in the reign of *Trajan*, there were alive not only apostolical men, the immediate Disciples of the Apostles, such as *Clemens*, whom St. *Paul* mentions in his Epistles (z), *Ignatius*, *Polycarp*; &c. but the Apostle *John* himself, and *Simeon* one of the seventy, sent forth in our Saviour's life-time to publish the Gospel, and a near kinsman of our Lord : So that, at that distance of time, inquisitive men, such as *Tacitus*, *Sueton*, *Pliny*, who mention Christian affairs, had access to the surest means of information. And (the Apostle *John* and *Clemens Romanus* having died before, and *Simeon* and *Ignatius* being martyred in, *Trajan's* persecution) those means, in some measure, were continued in *Polycarp*, as far down as *M. Antoninus Philosophus*, under whose reign *Polycarp* at *Smyrna*, and the Philosopher *Justin* at *Rome*, were crowned with martyrdom, when *Celsus* and *Lucian* were flourishing. But all the *Roman Provinces*, during the first ages of the *Gospel*, having had frequent intercourse

tius, in this passage, meant our Saviour. And as by this evidence we are brought within about sixteen years of the crucifixion ; so we are clearly taught, that the *Gospel* of Jesus Christ, very soon after its first promulgation in *Jerusalem*, had made its way to the city of *Rome*, and was there openly avowed.

(z) *Philip.* iv. 3.

intercourse one with another, but more especially with the city of *Rome*, the seat of the empire, and therefore the common centre of correspondence, every man of sense, that would take the trouble to inquire, had easy access to inform himself about the certainty of whatever was said to have been transacted in any part of the *Roman* dominions. And, no doubt, inquisitive men would soon have discovered the cheat, had there been no such person as *Jesus Christ*, or had there been any falsehood in the reports concerning him and his Apostles. Nor can it be thought but the vast multitudes of Christians, that appeared in *Rome*, in every capital and great city, within a short time of the crucifixion, and every where distinguished by the public hatred as a most impious set of men, would give occasion to people of the best understanding, to inquire into their history; which we have all the reason in the world to rest satisfied (nay, in fact it appears) they certainly did.

Thus, beginning at the present age, wherein we have sensible demonstration for the existence of Christianity, and carrying our inquiries backwards from one age to another, we meet with unquestionable evidence in every age, for the real being of that institution, till we arrive to that particular time when it first appeared in the world: And one cannot but confess, that as certainly as we know, that in those ages the earth was inhabited, that the inhabitants were divided in such particular governments, and that the administration of those governments was carried on by such particular laws; as certainly do we know, that the Christian religion, without interruption, continually subsisted in all the intermediate ages that lie between the present time and the reign of *Tiberius Cæsar*, when *Jesus Christ* was by *Pontius*

Pontius Pilate cut off, or crucified at *Jerusalem*. And as this long uninterrupted continuance of the Gospel; as its overspreading the *Roman* empire, and making its way to other nations, in its three first centuries, amidst persecutions, without any earthly power to support it; as its maintaining its ground to this very day; are effects that could not possibly have existed without an adequate cause; so what cause can be judged sufficient, but that which is explained in the Gospel, and which necessarily implies the truth of the matters of fact therein related?

I would therefore hope, that my demand will not be deemed unreasonable, when I ask, that what credit is given to the writings of *Tacitus*, *Sueton*, &c., the same may be allowed to the writings of the New Testament, the original books of Christianity, which Christians, in all ages, have understood to contain a true narration of things, the first books that ever appeared in the world with a new system of religion, putting an end to all other institutions, whether among Jews or Gentiles. And, in fact, I have made it appear, that what the New Testament reports, is well attested by Heathen Authors, inveterate enemies to the Christian cause, namely, that there were in the world such persons as *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles; that they taught such particular doctrines; that they wrought miracles; and that very soon after *Jesus* was crucified, the report went current among his disciples, that he was risen again from the dead. Nor can such matters of fact be rejected, but by those arguments that would overthrow the whole truth of all history, or ruin the credit of every matter of fact, for which we have not the immediate testimony of our senses; and consequently put a final end to all human society and correspondence.

Hitherto,

Hitherto, because its genuineness is still debated among learned men, I have not mentioned that famous testimony of *Josephus* concerning *Jesus Christ*. However, since I am, myself, pretty much satisfied as to its truth, or that it is the genuine production of *Josephus*, and since Mr. *Daubuz*, in his excellent book on that subject, has set its genuineness in so strong a light, sufficient, I really think, to satisfy any reasonable man, I cannot but indulge myself the pleasure here to transcribe it. And this notable testimony from *Josephus*, who was co-temporary with the Apostles, is thus, "About that time, says he, "appeared *Jesus*, who was a wise man, if one can call him a man, for he was a worker of miracles; and instructing those who delight in truth, gained many Disciples, both among *Jews* and *Gentiles*. "This was *Christ*. And altho', at the instigation of the chief men among us, *Pilate* condemned him to be crucified, yet the devotion of his followers did not fail: For, on the third day, he again appeared to them alive; the holy Prophets having published those and many other wonderful things concerning him; and, to this day, the sect of Christians, so called from him, is still subsisting(a)."

This is evidence very strong, intirely in point, and

its

(a) Γίνεται δὲ κατὰ τῶν τὸν χρόνον Ἰουδαῖος σοφὸς ἀκὴρ,
εἴγε ἄνθραξ αὐτὸν λέγειν χρὶ μὲν γὰρ παραδέξων ἔργων ποιη-
τικῶν, διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ιδονῆς τάλαντῆς δεχομένων, καὶ
πολλὰς μὲν Ιudeᾶς πολλὰς δὲ Ελληνικὰς ἐπιγνώσετο· ὁ Χριστὸς
ὅτος μὲν ὑπὸ αὐτὸν ἐγείρεται τῶν πρώτων ἀνθρώπων περ' ήμιν, σαυρῷ
ἐπιτετιμηκότος Πιλάτῳ, οὐκ ἐπαύσαντο διήγε πρῶτον αγαπήσαν-
τες ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς τρίτην ἔχων ημέραν πάλιν ζῶν, τῶν δεινῶν
προφητῶν ταῦτα καὶ ἄλλα μυρία θαυμάσια περὶ αὐτὸν εἰρηκό-
των· οἷς τε καὶ τὸν Χριστανὸν ἀπὸ τούτῃ ὠρμωμένης οὐκ ἀπέ-
ντε τὸ φῦλον Archacol. lib. 18. cap. 4.

its pointedness seems to be the cause that raises the suspicion in people's breasts, that it is the forgery of some unworthy Christian. But, when one considers the connection, which *Josephus* very well knew, *John Baptist* and *St. James*, one of the writers of the New Testament, had with *Jesus Christ*, and how very honourably he makes mention of both these persons, one needs not much wonder at the fulness of this testimony; nor can one well imagine what else, in consequence of his extreme good opinion of the Fore-runner, and the Disciple and Brother of *Christ*, one could have expected from him. But, as to this, the Reader may believe as he pleases. Without any regard to this testimony, I have briefly explained the reasons upon which one cannot but admit the truth of the history of the Gospel. And it appears, that those very facts mentioned by *Josephus*, are by Heathen writers, either expressly confessed, or allowed to have been reported by the Apostles: So that therein *Josephus* only testifies what we are informed of from *Tacitus*, *Celsus*, *Julian*; and other enemies of the Christian institution.

Before I conclude this Article, I must observe, that the Evangelical history is supported by the testimony of another set of men, whose evidence seems to be more valuable than that of those other Heathens hitherto mentioned. There is indeed no shadow of reason to suspect, that *Tacitus*, *Pliny*, or any other Pagan author, would tell a known falsehood, far less forge any point of history, to the advantage of the Christian institution: But it is very possible for people to be in such circumstances, wherein their belief, and confession of facts, may arise from a far more penetrating conviction. Thus, if upon the truth of certain facts, a man deliberately ventures the forfeiture of all his present enjoyments, and

and runs the hazard of being involved in all the calamities of life; what other construction can be put on this conduct, but that the man, if he be not quite out of his senses, is fully apprised of the importance of those facts, and, at the bottom of his soul, is irresistibly convinced of their reality, by the most over-bearing evidence? To be sure, the evidence upon which a wise man acts, will always be proportional to the stake he ventures. Now, this was the case of those Heathens, who left the religion of their country, wherein they had been educated, and embraced the profession of Christianity. Nor was it the multitude only that acted this part, but men of learning and philosophy, whose main business was to search after truth, and the design of whose studies was to perceive things as they are in themselves, and to form a judgment of them upon rational evidence. And what stronger testimony can one have, or desire to have, than from the mouths of persons of good sense and learning, whose education, and course of life, set them in direct opposition to the influence of those facts they attest; who came not to be convinced of their certainty, but upon their own deliberate re-searches; and who, in assuring the truth of them, are so far from serving any present interest, that thereby they expose themselves to contempt and hatred, to poverty, to every evil of life, to death itself? Of such witnesses I might instance in a great many; but I shall only mention the following:

Quadratus, a learned Heathen, having embraced the Christian religion, so zealous was he in its propagation, that he travelled through the world for that purpose: When it was persecuted, he durst avow it; he wrote in its defence, and presented his *Apology to the Emperor Adrian*: (as *Aristides* did one of his

his too about the same time, another learned man, famed for his philosophy at *Athens*, who had likewise left Paganism, and gone over to Christianity.) Of this *Apology* of *Quadratus* there only now remains a small fragment in *Eusebius*, wherein the Author expresses himself thus, “ As to the works, fays he, of “ our Saviour, they were of a lasting nature ; for “ they were real and true : Such as, persons healed “ of their diseases, and raised from the dead, who “ appeared and were seen, not only at the time “ of their being healed and raised, but long after- “ wards, during the time our Saviour was upon “ earth, nay, for a considerable time after his de- “ parture ; so that some of them were living in our “ days.”

Next to *Quadratus* I shall mention *Justin Martyr*, well known in the Christian world. This Philosopher flourished in the two reigns after *Adrian*; and so great was his passion for truth, that, in search of it, he carefully sifted all the several opinions of the different sects of Philosophers; nor could his mind any where take up its rest, or be fully satisfied, till he came to the knowledge of the Christian religion, which he heartily embraced, and in defence of which he wrote several very excellent pieces. In his first *Apology*, wherein he argues for the divine original of Christianity, he lets us know, that Baptism, the Eucharist, and the first day of the week, were religiously observed among Christians; that, before Baptism, it was the practice to make open profession of one’s belief of the truth of the Gospel, and solemnly to engage to live according to its laws: That, in the Eucharist, he who presided, offered up, in the name of the Son, and through the Holy Ghost, praises and thanksgivings to the Father

* Euseb, Hist. Eccles. lib. 4. cap. 3. Vid. lib. 3. cap. 37.

of all, for those his blessings, therein commemorating the passion of *Jesus Christ*: And that they assembled together, on the first day of the week, in order to celebrate the memory of *Christ's resurrection* (b): These, among other things left us by *Justin Martyr*, are noble monuments of the practice of the primitive Christians: And still, in our day, at the distance of 1600 years, are these religious rites, after the same manner, yet understood and observed.

The third Heathen Philosopher I mention, who turned Christian, is *Athenagoras* the *Athenian*. This Philosopher had at first so very unfavourable an opinion of the Christian institution, that, in order to prevent its success in the world, he entered into a design to write against it. In the execution, however, he was not so weak, or so dishonest, as to fetch his objections from uncertain fame, or the common reports that went about to the disadvantage of Christians; but minding to manage his argument with greater justice, and to better purpose, he applied himself to the reading of the Scriptures, upon which the Christian faith is founded. And thus *Athenagoras*, putting himself in the way to acquire a just understanding of things, his examination proved so successful, as to lead him to perceive the truth of the Gospel; upon which he altered his opinions quite, and the keen Antagonist was changed into a zealous assertor of the Christian cause. So that, instead of writing against Christianity, as he at first intended, this Philosopher composed a fine Apology in defence of its professors, and offered it to *M. Antoninus* and his son *Commodus*, wherein he particularly complains, as *Justin Martyr* had done before him, that the name of Christian, without any other crime, was

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judged

(b) *Just. Mart. 1 Apol. p. 93, 94, 97, 98, 99.*

judged a sufficient ground of punishment (c.) And whereas the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, was a strong bar to the reception of the Gospel among the learned Heathen; he likewise wrote an excellent little Treatise upon that subject, and therein shows the possibility, the fitness, and justice of such an event.

These now, besides a great many others that might be named, are witnesses for the history of the Gospel, successively contemporary with one another from the days of the Apostles, as far down as near the end of the second century, against whom no possible exception can be taken. They believed the truth of the Gospel;—but they did not believe till they were engaged by proper evidence:—Upon this evidence they changed their religion, the last thing a sober man will quit withal;—and the faith, to which, by this evidence, they were converted, they professed in the face of mortal dangers. I do not here pretend to alledge, they had good reason to lay such stress upon the matters of fact related in the Gospel, as from thence to conclude the divinity of the Christian religion: I only mean to say, That of the truth of those facts they were thoroughly convinced. And when men of sense and learning are found to attest the truth of facts, which they did not believe till after having narrowly examined them, and in attesting of which they are extremely conscious they expose themselves to the severest treatment; if such testimony shall be rejected, I know not what sort of evidence among mankind can be depended on. In the present case, it is true, one may call it the testimony of friends; but one must likewise recollect, it is of friends who immediately before

(c) Legat. pro. Christian. sub. init.

before were enemies, and whose friendship was gained only by the bare force of naked truth, which, one should think, is an evidence of all others the strongest and most convincing; especially, when one considers, that in the service of this truth, however contradictory to their former sentiments, our rational converts are now willing to share the greatest dangers. And indeed, to imagine, that such men as *Quadratus*, *Justin*, *Atbenagoras*, would stake all their comfort here, and all their happiness hereafter, upon a matter of fact not thoroughly canvassed and examined, or upon a falsehood, either contrived by themselves, or forged by other people, is beyond measure senseless and extravagant, and would reduce the universal practice of mankind, in relying on moral evidence, or human testimony, to be the greatest absurdity in nature(d).

Let

(d) After the days of the Apostles, in the writings that came abroad in the first ages of Christianity, one sometimes happens to meet with such sort of reasoning, and such sort of sentiments, as we now a days cannot but account very fanciful and very extravagant. And considering the plainness and simplicity of the history and doctrines of the Gospel, it may be thought matter of wonder, how those primitive Fathers, in some instances, came to argue in so affected and childish a manner, and to entertain such wild and foolish notions. The common apology, upon such occasions, for every Father, is this, "Such was the humour of the age." An apology not very intelligible. In my apprehension, the matter is briefly this:

A common branch of education among the Heathen and greatly esteemed, was *Rhetoric*; wherein they were taught to declaim upon any subject, or to argue upon either side of any question. The great art therefore was to manage an argument, not from solid and rational topics, but from whatever, in such a case, could be made to bear the semblance of truth, or a shew of probability; by imposing upon things a figurative sense, or by turning them into metaphor and allegory, by forced allusions, or by what other artifice they were capable of promoting their purpose, not always truth, but victory.

Another

Let me therefore hope, the Reader will have no difficulty in allowing, that the testimony of those Heathens who turned Christian, is at least a strong subsidiary proof of the history of our Saviour; and that,

Another considerable branch of learning among the Heathen, was Philosophy; which consisted, not so much in the handling of moral subjects, as in the study of the nature and causes of things, both heavenly and mundane. And here, among Philosophers, as well as Poets, in what concerns the gods, and daemons, one it entertained with sentiments of a very odd and extraordinary nature. But to such a height of extravagance did the Poets proceed in their account of the gods, from whence the notions of the bulk of mankind were derived, that Philosophers, quite ashamed of such gross absurdities, did all they were able to explain them away, by representing them in a figurative sense, or as metaphor and allegory. By which means likewise the humour of allegorizing things, or making metaphors of them, greatly prevailed. And, no doubt, he must have been counted the acute Philosopher, who was the most subtle and expert in framing and adapting his allegories.

Now, the primitive Fathers, only converts to Christianity, having had their education in the Heathen learning, one may easily conceive, that of course they must have brought along with them into the Christian church, that turn of reasoning to which they had been accustomed, and all those sentiments with which they had been prepossessed, and which, after their conversion, they apprehended were not inconsistent with the doctrines of the Gospel. Thus we find Justin Martyr, according to the rhetoric of those days, with great affectation declaiming upon the cross of Christ, and pursuing his argument in a very odd, figurative and metaphorical manner, making this very cross, by his far fetched comparisons, to be signified and represented by every thing. Thus also we find Athenagoras, another convert to Christianity, educated likewise in the Heathen philosophy, publishing, as Justin Martyr and others have likewise done, some very strange sentiments concerning daemons.

The sentiments indeed are very strange, but they are none of their framing, they sprang from their education; they were firmly believed among the Heathen, and their learned men and Philosophers taught and maintained them. Thus Celsus represents the daemons conversant about this earth, as, γενέσι ουγρεθκότες, dissolved in feasts of love. Plutarch too, when talking of Numa's intrigue

that, taking it along with the testimony of those other Heathens who still continued in their infidelity, there can be in the world no matters of fact better attested, than are those recorded in the Gospel.

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intrigue with Egeria, goes along with the Egyptians in apprehending, that a man cannot possibly have to do with a goddess, but that it is possible for gods and dæmons to mix with the daughters of men, and to beget children; Καίτοι δοκύσιν ὥκ ἀπιστίως, Ἀιγύπτιοι διαιρεῖν, ὡς γυναικὶ μὲν ὥκ ἀδύνατον πνεῦμα πλησίασαι θεός, ἢ τίνας ἐντεχεῖν ἀρχάς γενέσεως, ἀνδρὶ δὲ ὥκ ἔσι σύμμιξις πρὸς θεόν, ύδε δημιλία σώματος. In Numa, p. 62. And of this he gives us a proof in the case of Olympias; ὅφθι δὲ ποτὲ ἢ δράκων, κοιράνευς τῆς Ὄλυμπιαδος, παρεκτέ ταμέρος τῷ σώματι. Where it is reported of Philip, ἀποβαλεῖν δὲ τῶν ὄψεων ἀυτον τὴν ἵτεραν, ἦν τῷ τῆς θύρας ἀρμῷ προσβαλον, κατώπινεν ἐν μορφῇ δράκοντος συνενυκόμενον τῇ γυναικὶ τὸν θεόν. In Alexander. p. 665. And, what I take to be another very surprising instance of the same kind, we have in Pausanias, lib. 6. cap. 6. In short, I can understand nothing else from the common notion that prevailed among the Heathen, wherein not only Poets, but Philosophers and Historians apprehended, that their gods had children by such particular women; so curious were some people, or of such consequence was it thought to know, who was Æsculapius's mother, that in order to be satisfied in this question, Apollophanes consulted the oracle at Delphi. And in the response Apollo having declared, that Æsculapius was his son by the beautiful Coronis the daughter of Phlegyas :

Ω̄ μέγα χάρμα βροτοῖς βλασών Ἀσκληπίε πᾶσιν
Οὐ̄ Φληγυνῆς ἔτικτεν ἐμῇ φιλότητι μεγεῖσα
Ιμερόεστα Κορωνῆς ἐνι κραναῖ Επιδαυρί

This Pausanias counts a demonstration, that Arsinoe was not his mother, lib. 2. cap. 26. And the story goes, that in revenge of that god's having debauched his daughter, Phlegyas set fire to Apollo's temple; for which he was severely punished: And amidst his punishment, thus he calls upon the world to learn from his example,

Discite iustitiam moniti, et non temnere divos.

But

SECT. II.

*Lord Bolingbroke's Objection to the Authenticity of the
Gospel-history of no consequence.*

THIS branch of the argument hitherto explained was published by itself in the year 1741. How far

But that, in the undoubted opinion of the Heathen, their gods (whom the primitive Fathers could not but regard as wicked dæmons) mixed with the daughters of men, nothing can be more convincing than the most piteous case of the chaste Paulina, reported by Josephus in his Antiquities, lib. 18. cap. 3. § 4. from the whole of this Lady's conduct, one clearly sees, that the story of Jupiter's assuming the form of Amphitryon, wherein he became the father of Hercules, (for says the god,) “ *Alcumenæ usuram corporis sui, & concubitu gravidam feci filio,*” Plaut. and such other like stories, must have been regarded by the Heathen world, not as meer poetical fictions, but as real matters of fact. And in this light, to be sure, the Thasians apprehended them, when they gave out, that the ghost of Hercules, in the form of Timothenes, had carnally to do with the mother of Theagenes. Θάσιοι δὲ ἐν Τιμοσθένες, παῖδα εἶναι, Θεαγένη φασίν ἀλλὰ ιερᾶσθαι μὲν Ἡρακλεῖ τὸν Τιμοσθένη Θάσιῳ, τῷ Θεαγένῃ δὲ τῇ μητρὶ Ἡρακλέν συγγενέσθαι φάσμα ἐοικός Τιμοσθένει. *Pausan. lib. 6. cap. 11.* And of Atia, the mother of Augustus, we are told, that one night, immediately after Apollo had left her, a mark, in form of a serpent, came out upon her body; so that she never afterwards went to the public baths. *Suet. in August. cap. 92.* It was likewise a common opinion among the Heathen, and taught by their learned men, that dæmons were greatly delighted and feasted, and grew fat and strong, with the fumes of incense and the rich steams and blood of victims. This likewise is the doctrine of Celsus and Porphyry. Celsus declares himself thus: Χρὴ γὰρ ἵσως ὡς ἀπιστῶν αὐδραστοῖς, ὡς δῆν φασί, διότι τῶν μὲν περιγείων δαιμόνων τὸ πλεῖστον γενέσει συντετηκός, ὡς προσπλωμένον ἀμάτι, ὡς κνίση, ὡς μελωδίαις,

far it might have been regarded by Lord Bolingbroke, had he attended to it in this light, I know not. But, in his Letters lately published on the study and use of History, his Lordship has thrown out several things
that

διαίτης, καὶ ἄλλοις τισι τοιότοις προσθέμενον, ορεῖτοις ὅδειρ δύναται τὸν τε θεραπεῦσαι σῶμα, καὶ μέλλονταν τύχην ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ πόλει προειπεῖν, καὶ ὅσα περὶ τὰς θυγατράς πράξεις ταῦτα ἴσσαντε καὶ δύνανται Apud Orig. lib. 8. And says Porphyry : *Βίκονται γὰρ εἶναι θεοί, καὶ οὐ προεωρέα ἀντῶν δύναμις δουκεῖν θεὸς εἶναι οἱ μήγισος Οὗτοι οἱ χαιρόντες λοιβῆτε κνίσοντε, δι' ὧν ἀντῶν τὸ πνευματικὸν πιάνεται ζῆν γὰρ τῷτο ἀτμοῖς, καὶ αναδυμάσσεσι, καὶ ποικίλως διὰ τῶν ποικίλων, καὶ δυναμέται ταῖς εἰς τῶν αἰμάτων καὶ σαρκῶν κνίσασι.* De Abstin. lib. 2.

This therefore is the plain matter of fact : The education of the primitive Fathers in the Heathen learning, led them, with the other Philosophers of those days, to entertain such particular sentiments, and to employ such a certain form of reasoning, as are now justly held absurd and ridiculous : And my design of making this remark, is to show, that the weakness of judgment, which those primitive Fathers betray in such instances, can discredit their testimony in matters of fact, as some people may alledge it does, no more than it can discredit the testimony of the best Heathen Philosophers. Indeed such people's attestation of matters of fact, that favour, or that have a near connection with such absurd sentiments, may very justly be suspected. But where their mind is not biased by such sentiments, and they are otherwise free and irreproachable, I see nothing that can invalidate their testimony. And truly, if weakness of judgment, in some particular matters of opinion or speculation, were sufficient to disgrace an evidence in all matters of fact whatsoever, I am afraid that few of mankind, especially of the learned world, would be found deserving of credit. In all such cases it seems only requisite, carefully to advert to the tendency of a man's absurd opinions, and to beware of readily believing those matters of fact, which from his known prejudices, may appear to him certain and undoubted.

But I will farther willingly confess, that the primitive Fathers, after they had renounced Heathenism, and espoused Christianity, came to conceive so warm and strong a passion for the Christian revelation ; and esteeming it the will of God that it should be established in the world, were animated with such fervent zeal
for

that would make the authenticity of the Gospel-history still a problem, very far from being yet solved. I confess it appears to me, that this noble Writer has said nothing of that moment that deserves to be answered.

for its support and propagation, that they gladly embraced every opportunity whereby to promote its interest; and laid hold of every argument that could recommend it to the superior esteem of mankind. And had this heat and fervour been attended with a steady composure of mind, and an open freedom of judgment, that engaged and enabled them to examine things thoroughly, before they happened to propose them in defence and recommendation of Christianity, nothing surely could have been more commendable. But their warm hasty zeal (which, in the nature of things, could not but grow warmer from opposition) made them rash and forward, impatient of inquiry; so that very inconsiderately they catched at every incident that seemed promising, and amused themselves, and the world about them, with imaginary events, which, instead of advancing the credit of the Gospel, could not but, contrary to their intention, rather impair its reputation. Thus, for example, the arguments which, in the fervour of his zeal, Justin Martyr rashly draws against the Heathen, and in defence of the Gospel, from the statue of Simon Magus, from the Sibylline Oracles, from the story of the Septuagint Version, are false and groundless, and are far from doing service to the Christian cause. And such instances of rashness, and want of consideration, occasioned by a forward over-heated zeal, added to what I observed before, ought to make us cautious in the use of the primitive Fathers, and prevent our resigning ourselves implicitly to their judgment in matters of doctrine, or to their testimony in matters of fact. In both which, they have unhappily led the way to many erroneous opinions, and superstitious practices, that have greatly deformed the Christian institution, and involved the world in many endless contentious disputes. And such remarks, I hope, can offend only those who think with If. Barthelemi, that, amidst so many heresies now in the world, it is necessary that a profound regard should be maintained in the church for the holy Fathers: For that their authority once despised and lost, there is no way left whereby to confound heretics, and to engage people to acknowledge the holy See. Hist. du Jansenis. tom. 3. p. 309.

But whatever, after their conversion, was the credulity of the primitive Fathers, with respect to such events or occurrences, as seemed to flatter or to conspire with their passionate zeal for the defence

answered. But as such a character, some people may think, ought not to be neglected, I shall employ a few pages in considering what his Lordship is pleased to advance upon this article.

We must therefore conceive, that Lord *Bolingbroke* is animated with a mighty zeal for the truth of Christianity: And thus inspired, altho' the world is full of books written on purpose to justify the Christian cause, which books have not yet, and never will be answered, his Lordship, I say, quite overpowered by his Christian zeal, loudly complains of Christian Divines, that hitherto they have done nothing to purpose, and therefore calls upon the Clergy in all Christian communions, telling them, "It is high time they should join their forces, and establish those historical facts, which are the foundations of the whole system, on clear and unquestionable authority, such as they require in all cases of moment from others (e)." Pleasant enough! With what has his Lordship been conversant in the world? Why, "it has been long matter of astonishment to this noble Author, how Christian Divines could take so much silly pains to establish mystery

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"on

defence and propagation of the Gospel; no man can imagine, that by any degree of credulity they came over to the Christian profession. On the contrary, in opposition to their making of this change (where they were not engaged by a sincere and impartial search after truth, which upon leading a man to embrace Christianity, was no less dangerous) there stood, not only the whole force of strong prejudices and stubborn habits, from their having been early educated, and long accustomed to the Heathen learning and religion, but all the unavoidable dangers to which the professors of Christianity were then continually exposed. We are therefore well assured; it must have been the most overbearing evidence, on the side of those matters of fact, upon which the truth of Christianity is grounded, that determined them to declare themselves Christians.

(e) Letters of the study, &c. p. 183. vol. 1.

" on metaphysics, revelation on philosophy, and
 " matters of fact on abstract reasoning (f.)" And indeed, to go about to establish mystery on metaphysics is abundantly idle ; but to show that revelation is consistent with philosophy, with the purest informations of reason, does not seem to be altogether so idle ; nor can I think it possible to establish any one matter of fact, without the assistance of abstract reasoning, I mean without explaining that fact by the principles of moral evidence. No doubt, it is monstrously absurd, in the room of testimony or witnesses, to substitute abstract reasoning. But this is an absurdity peculiar to our Infidels, who by abstract reasoning would prove, that God never revealed himself to mankind, and, in several instances, who to plain matter of fact oppose nothing but empty speculation. I would fain hope that this noble Author knows of no Christian Writer, on whom this absurdity, in proving the truth of Christianity, can be fixed. On the contrary, I incline to think, that his Lordship's obseruation, not very acceptable to Lord Shafesbury, is what every Christian will subscribe to ; " A religion
 " on founded on the authority of a divine mission,
 " confirmed by prophesies and miracles, appeals to
 " facts; and the facts must be proved as all other
 " facts that pass for authentic are proved ; for faith,
 " so reasonable after this proof, is absurd before
 " it(g.)"

It is true, " No scholar will dare to deny, that
 " false history, as well as sham miracles, has been
 " employed to propagate Christianity formerly :
 " and whoever examines the Writers of our own age
 " will find the same abuse of history continued (h.)"
 This likewise is an obseruation of Lord Bolingbroke:

And

(f) *Ibid.* p. 175. (g) *Ibid.* p. 174. (h) *Ibid.* p. 176.

And it is charitable to believe, that the observation is made, not with a design to prejudice the world against the truth of the Gospel, but to put people upon their guard, and to engage them to be cautious and circumspect in admitting any particular history or miracles in proof of the Christian revelation. A most necessary warning ; and as there is no argument that has not had the misfortune to fall into bad hands, a warning in all cases to be listened to. No scholar will dare to deny, that false reasoning and inconclusive arguments have been employed to propagate the belief of a God, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments. But as this observation by no means insinuates, there is no just reasoning, no conclusive arguments, whereby one may demonstrate the truth of these fundamental articles of natural religion ; so as little can Lord Bolingbroke's observation insinuate, there is no authentic history, no real miracles, from whence one may demonstrate the truth of the Christian institution. Some indeed, in matters of history, would establish universal Pyrrhonism ; but his Lordship laughs at those people, and leaves the Sceptics, in modern as well as antient history, to triumph “ in the notable discovery of the Ides of “ one month mistaken for the Kalends of another, “ or in the various dates, and contradictory circum-“ stances which they find in weekly Gazettes and “ monthly Mercuries (i). ” His opinion is, that “ the body of history which we possess, since “ antient memorials have been so critically examined, “ and modern memorials have been so multiplied, “ contains in it such a probable series of events, “ easily distinguishable from the improbable, as “ force the assent of every man who is in his
“ senses.”

(i) *Ibid. p. 169.*

“ senses (*k*).” This is his Lordship’s opinion ; and in this opinion, as I see no shadow of reason why he should not, I hope he comprehends both sacred and profane history. But the truth is,

This noble Writer, without offering to gratify his Christian zeal in performing the charitable task for them, affects to be highly displeased with all Christian Divines, for their not having as yet made out the authenticity of the Gospel-history. He loudly complains, that “ whilst history alone can furnish “ the proper proofs, that the religion they teach is “ of God, the unfair manner in which these proofs “ have been and are daily furnished, creates preju-“ dices, and gives advantages against Christianity “ that require to be removed.—Many and many “ instances of this abuse of history might be pro-“ duced. It is grown into custom, Writers copy “ one another, and the mistake that was committed, “ or the falsehood that was invented by one, is a-“ dopted by hundreds (*l*).” This, in his zeal for Christianity, is his Lordship’s complaint. And no doubt any man conversant in those matters, has it in his power to produce many instances of the abuse of history, among some that are called Christian Divines ; which instances, however, with no reasonable man, can in any measure prove injurious to the truth of the Gospel. But I esteem his Lordship for his not trifling in the matter, but producing an instance, which some people may think of consequence ; and, if true, to extenuate the authority of the Gospel-history. His Lordship observes, that “ in establishing the “ truth of this history, Christian Divines appeal to “ the testimony of the Fathers of the first century, “ and alledge that these Fathers have, in their wri-“ tings, transcribed several passages out of our Evan-

“ gelists :

(*k*) Ibid. p. 137.

(*l*) Ibid. p. 176.

“ gelists:” But, what is thus alledged, our noble Author pretends, “ is a mistake or a falsehood.” Here then is a single instance of the abuse of history, which Lord *Bolingbroke* apprends may well suffice to “ discredit the truth of the history of the Gospel (*m*). And how far his Lordship is in the right, as to this particular instance, or supposing him right, how far it would affect the Gospel-history, I propose here to consider.

Let it then be observed, not only in all the several articles that concern faith and practice, but in the other articles of less importance, the Fathers of the first century, do so exactly agree with the Authors of the New Testament, that one is led directly to apprehend, that these Fathers have certainly taken their account and notions of things from those Authors: For one cannot well suppose, that the Authors of the New Testament had their information from these Fathers. This lies obvious to every Man who compares their writings together. In particular, the Fathers of the first century tell us, that, for the propagation of the Gospel, our Saviour employed so many persons called Apostles. “ *Iesus Christ*, says *Clemens Romanus*, was sent of God. The Apostles were sent by *Iesus Christ*. Those Apostles went forth, and preached the Gospel to the world, and in towns and villages appointed other fit persons to carry on the same service (*n*).” In this view it is, that *Ignatius*, in his Epistle to the *Magnesians*, exhorts those people to continue stedfast in the doctrines of our Lord and his Apostles (*o*): Elsewhere declaring, that, as for himself, “ the Gospel, and the Apostles were his refuge (*p*) ;” meaning, most certainly, not the Apostles themselves then dead, but their

(*m*) *Ibid.* p. 177, 178.
(*o*) *Ign.* ad *Mag.* § 13.

(*n*) *Clem.* 1st Epist. § 42.
(*p*) *Id.* ad *Philadelph.* § 5.

their writings. And says, *Polycarp*, “ Let us so serve him with fear and reverence, as he himself hath commanded us, and the Apostles who preached the Gospel to us, and the Prophets who foretold the coming of our Lord (q). ” I confess, neither *Barnabas*, *Clemens*, *Ignatius*, *Polycarp*, nor *Papias*, do any where give us the names of all the Apostles : Nor is there any thing in their writings that would make such a catalogue necessary. However, as occasion seems to require, they mention some of them ; and after the same manner take notice of their writings. *Barnabas* indeed mentions no name, but he tells us, that “ Christ elected his Apostles, that he gave them power to preach the gospel ; and that their number was twelve (r). ” Of those Apostles *Clemens* names *Paul*, *Cephas*, and *Apollo* ; and informs us, that *Paul* wrote an Epistle to the *Corinthians* (s). *Paul* is likewise mentioned by *Ignatius*, who insinuates that this Apostle wrote an Epistle to the *Ephesians* (t). *Polycarp* too speaks of *Paul* as an Apostle, and observes his writing an Epistle to the *Philippians*. “ Neither I, says *Polycarp*, nor any one like me, can attain to the wisdom of the blessed and illustrious *Paul*, who, when among you, taught the word of truth fully and steadily, and when absent wrote you an Epistle, whereby you may be built up in the faith. I beseech you, therefore, follow the patience which you have observed in *Paul* himself, and in the rest of the Apostles (u). ” But we have a greater number named by *Papias*, who was St. *John*’s disciple and *Polycarp*’s companion : This Father, among the Disciples

(q) *Polycarp. ad Philip.* § 6.(r) *Barnab. Epist.* § 5. 8.(s) *Clem. 1st Epist.* § 47.(t) *Ign. ad Ephes.* § 12.(u) *Polycarp. Epist.* § 3. 9.

Disciples or Apostles of our Lord, mentions *Andrew*, *Peter*, *Philip*, *Thomas*, *James*, *John*, and *Matthew*. He gives us to understand, that both *Matthew* and *Mark* committed the Gospel to writing. And he quotes passages from the Acts of the Apostles, the first Epistle of *John*, and the first of *Peter* (x).

Irenæus, indeed, never saw any of the Apostles, and cannot therefore be counted of the first century; but I may here add him, as he was a disciple of *Poly-carپ's*, and retained the deepest impressions of what that antient Father taught the world, concerning the miracles and doctrines of our Saviour, as he had learned them from the Apostle *John*, and from many others, with whom he was intimately acquainted, who had seen our Lord, the Word of life (y). And, in the case of *Irenæus*, one may observe, with what caution and integrity these Fathers acted, in matters relating to the Christian institution, and how concerned they were to prevent all imposition and forgery. At the end of one of his books, in defence of the doctrines of the Gospel, he subjoins this awful charge: "Thou who shalt transcribe this book, I adjure thee, by our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and by his appearance to judge the quick and the dead, that thou compare what thou shalt have transcribed, and carefully correct it by this copy from whence thou hast transcribed it. And this adjuration thou shalt in like manner write out, and insert in your copy (z)." Now this same *Irenæus* informs us, that

(x) *Eusebius* is of opinion, that when *Papias* tells us, he had learned the Gospel from the Antients, he only means those who had conversed with the Apostles. But that, by Antients, *Papias* means the Apostles themselves, is plain from his immediately speaking of *Andrew*, *Peter*, &c. under that designation. *Vid. Euseb. Ec. Hist. lib. 3. c. 39.*

(y) *Id. ibid. lib. 5. cap. 20.*

(z) *Id. ibid.*

that *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*, did each of them write the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*: And from these Gospels, by name, he transcribes a great many passages (*a*). He is very frequent too in his citations from the other books of the New Testament. And, no doubt, these are the writings, particularly the four Gospels, which *Irenæus* has in his eye, when he assures us, “ that, whatever *Polyarp* taught from “ the information of those who had seen our Lord, “ was altogether consonant to the Scriptures (*b*). ” Nay, from *Irenæus* we likewise learn, that, in order to gain credit to their false doctrines, the Heretics of the first century (contemporary with the Apostles,) or with those who saw the Apostles, appealed to the Scriptures, particularly the four Gospels, which they misunderstood and perverted to their own purposes (*c*): *Heracleon*, in particular, wrote Commentaries upon the Gospel of St. *John*, which *Origen* takes frequent notice of.

Thus we see, who were the Apostles or Disciples of our Lord, that were first employed to preach the Gospel to the world, and whose doctrines and instructions were regarded by the Fathers of the first century, as true and authentic, of divine authority, or as coming from *Jesus Christ*.

We

(*a*) *Irenæus*, cont. *Hæres*. lib. 3. cap. 1. 9, 10, 11. et pass.

(*b*) *Euseb*. ub. *supra*.

(*c*) Τοιαύτα μὲν ὡν περὶ Πλυνόματος αὐτῶν, καὶ τὸ πλάσματος πάντες λέγοσιν, ἐφορμίζειν βιαζόμενοι τὰ κακῶς εἰρημένα, τοῖς κακῶς ἐπινευημένοις ὑπὲν αὐτῶν. καὶ σὺ μόνος ἐκ τῶν Ευαγγελιῶν, καὶ τῶν Αποστολῶν περιώντας, τὰς ἀποδεξεῖς ποιεῖσθαι, παρατρέποντες τὰς ἔρινεις, καὶ φαδηρύντες τὰς ἔξηντες. ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ Νόμου, καὶ Προφητῶν. *Irenæus*, cont. *Hæres*. lib. 1. cap. 3. § 6. Vid. cap. 8. et alib. Tanta est autem circa Evangelia hæc firmitas, ut et ipsi Hæretici testimonium reddant eis, et ex ipsis egrediens unusquisque eorum conetur suam confirmare doctrinam. Id. ibid. lib. 3. cap. 11. § 7. Vid. cap. 14. § 3. 4.

We find likewise, that so many of those Apostles or Disciples of our Lord, namely *Matthew, Mark, Luke; John, Peter, Paul,* left their instructions in writing: And that those writings are the original and authentic records, wherein the Son of God hath brought life and immortality to light, and taught mankind the way that leads to that happiness.

It is therefore from the living instructions of the Apostles, and those instructions committed to writing, that the Fathers of the first century, the contemporaries and immediate successors of the Apostles, derived the account they give us concerning *Jesus Christ*, and the doctrines of his Gospel. And thus it is, that in the writings of these Fathers, there is nothing discordant or contradictory to those of the New Testament; but, in the history of the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of *Jesus*, and in all articles of faith and practice, an intire harmony and agreement.

When, therefore, in the writings of these Fathers, one happens to meet with any particulars represented to be said or done by our Saviour, what else can one presume to think, but that their knowledge of those particulars came either from the mouths or the writings of the Apostles? And if, in the writings of the Apostles, those particulars occur to us, expressed in the same, or much after the same manner they are expressed in the writings of *Clemens, Polycarp, &c.* although these Fathers do not expressly mention the particular book or Author from whence they had those passages, may not one reasonably rest satisfied, that they certainly transcribed them from the writings of that particular Apostle who relates them? How, in a consistency with history, and a prudent unbiased judgment of things, one can do otherwise, is, I confess, beyond my comprehension.

Indeed, every body knows from St. Luke, that, in the days of the Apostles, many had gone about to write the history of the Gospel: And one may easily apprehend that those histories came into the hands of the Fathers of the first century. But what those histories are, or by whom compiled, and in those days how far they were regarded, none of those Fathers take so much notice of them, as to inform us. Here it is, however, that Christian Divines come to be thus questioned and reprendered by Lord Bolingbroke: “ If, says his Lordship, the Fathers of the first century do mention some passages that are agreeable to what we read in our Evangelists, will it follow, that these Fathers had the same Gospels before them? To say so, is a manifest abuse of history, and quite inexcusable in Writers that knew, or should have known, that these Fathers made use of other Gospels, wherein such passages might be contained, or they might be preserved in unwritten tradition (d).” In unwritten tradition! not, I hope, when those Fathers tell us, those passages are written. Nor is the importance of his Lordship’s *might-be’s* so easy to be understood, whilst this common maxim prevails in the world, “ That which may be an evasion in any case, can be admitted in none.”

But, by such reflections, what is the good use which this noble Writer is here making of history? He does not alledge, that those passages mentioned, or quoted by the Fathers of the first century, and which we meet with in our Evangelists, are forged and not authentic. On the contrary, as if he meant to show the folly of his design, or how groundless his complaint is, he seems to establish their authenticity, in telling us, that those passages might be contained

(d) P. 178.

tained in the other Gospels, which, at that time, were in the hands of these Fathers; or, they might be preserved in unwritten tradition, and by that means come to their knowledge. As those passages, therefore, are confessedly not forged, but authentic history, I am at a loss, I say, to understand what it is that his Lordship means here particularly to condemn. "They are agreeable to what we read, i. e. "they are contained in our Evangelists; but they "might be contained in other Gospels, or they might "be preserved in unwritten tradition; and there- "fore, to say that the Fathers of the first century "had them from our Evangelists, or had the same "Gospels before them, is a manifest abuse of history." That this is any abuse of history, I am far from being sensible. But I am well persuaded, that his Lord- ship's argument is a manifest abuse of logic, and quite inexcusable in a Writer that pretends to reasoning. But, leaving such sophistry to the judgment of the Reader, I shall observe, that no lover of truth can go along with his Lordship in affirming, "It "is a manifest abuse of history, and quite inexcuse- "able, to pretend, that the Fathers of the first "century had our Evangelists before them, whilst "it is well known that these Fathers made use "of other Gospels, wherein those passages they "mention might be contained;" till it shall be clearly proved,

That, in the first century, not the Gospels of our Evangelists, but some other Gospels were existing, and made use of by the Fathers of that century.— That those other Gospels did actually contain those passages mentioned by these Fathers in their writings:—And that though it should appear, that the Gospels of our Evangelists were at that time exist- ing, yet these Fathers did, preferably to our Evan- gelists,

gelist, transcribe those passages from those other Gospels. I say, before a lover of truth can agree to his Lordship's conclusion, he must be satisfied as to these particulars.

Indeed, our noble Author seems to think very contemptibly of that man, who should be found so far ignorant as not to know, that the Fathers of the first century made use of other Gospels. And, no doubt, his Lordship is fully satisfied upon good and clear evidence, that such Gospels were then certainly existing, and actually in the hands of these Fathers. What those particular Gospels are, which this noble Writer might here have had in his eye, I will not take upon me to divine (e). Possibly, had he been pleased

(e) Of the other Gospels, the most considerable mentioned by the primitive Fathers, are the Gospel of the *Hebrews*, or of the *Nazarenes*, and the Gospel of the *Egyptians*. It is thought that those Gospels taught no heretical doctrines; and, no doubt, they contained a good deal of genuine history. But, in my apprehension, they could of themselves be of no great authority. When they first appeared in the world cannot be determined; nor do we find them any where expressly mentioned till towards the end of the second century, when *Clemens Alexandrinus* quotes some passages from them. Of those Gospels nothing now remains but some fragments. The most antient seems to be that of the *Hebrews*. And, from the fragments of this Gospel, one may easily discern, that the author has not attended to the real truth of things, but given credit to false reports, or indulged his own imagination in forging some particular events. What I have in my eye is this, in this Gospel according to the *Hebrews* we are told, "that *James* had swore, that, from the time of his drinking of the cup of the Lord, he would not eat bread, till he should see him raised again from the dead: And that, after the resurrection, Christ appeared to him, and said, My brother, eat your bread, for the Son of Man is risen from the dead." Now, this passage, as it represents *James* amidst some passionate hopes, at least concerning the resurrection, appears to me altogether inconsistent with the notions, and sentiments, and expectations, that prevailed, and which at that time could not but prevail,

pleased to mention them, one might have examined whether they appeared so early. But whatever they were, one may beg to be informed, what is that clear evidence, upon which his Lordship is so very positive as to this particular? From the Fathers of the first century we can learn nothing concerning those other Gospels. I would presume to ask, Can his Lordship produce any other evidence than that which arises from St. Luke's information? Whatever it be, in my apprehension, it is impossible to prove, by any evidence, that other Gospels were existing in the first century, and made use of by the Fathers of that century; where the self-same evidence (not to speak of stronger) does not equally prove the self-same thing concerning the Gospels of our Evangelists. So certain and undoubted is this, that one may safely challenge the most knowing Infidel to show it otherwise. And in such circumstances, one may venture to affirm, that to be positive as to the existence of other Gospels, and to call in question those of the New Testament, is a partiality that does not become our noble Author, and may be counted a manifest abuse of history, which requires every thing to be put in its own proper place, as the importance of the thing, and the evidence upon which it stands, shall determine it. Nor, without this wise and judicious conduct, this uprightness and impartiality, can the great end of history well be attained, "the making

vail, in the minds of the Disciples and Apostles, who neither apprehended the crucifixion, nor expected the resurrection, an event with them so incredible, that they regarded the first accounts of it as idle tales. Whoever, therefore, was the author of this Gospel of the Nazarenes, he was none of the immediate followers and Disciples of our Lord, he is unacquainted with the real situation of people's minds during the life and passion of our Saviour; and framing events according to his own fancy, is in the case of James the Just, guilty of a manifest misrepresentation and falsity.

" making us better men and better citizens." And what history more conducive, more effectual to this noble purpose, than " the history of the life of Jesus ! " Thus, therefore, Lord *Bolingbroke* can be confident of the existence of other Gospels in the first century, upon no other evidence than that which equally proves, that the Gospels of our Evangelists were then likewise existing. And as to the next particular ;

Without any scruple, I go along with his Lordship in believing, that the passages here understood to be mentioned by the Fathers of the first century, might be contained in the other Gospels then published, or they might, at that time, be preserved in unwritten tradition : Nay, as our Evangelists do not pretend to have recorded all the sayings and actions of Jesus, I doubt not but other authentic passages concerning our Saviour, not mentioned in our Gospels, or in the Fathers of the first century, might likewise be contained in those other Gospels, or preserved in unwritten tradition. Thus far I am prone to believe. So that here,

With respect to the *third* particular ; There are three different sources, from whence these Fathers might have derived those passages transcribed in their writings, namely, the books of the New Testament ;—some other Gospels ;—and unwritten tradition : Of which Gospels, and unwritten tradition, we of this age are altogether ignorant. Now, the question is not, Which of these three shall be counted to contain the most authentic history concerning our Saviour ? As to this we do not here differ; they are supposed all equal and upon a level ; for his Lordship affirms, that " those passages, that are agreeable to " what we read in our Evangelists, might be con-
ta ined in those other Gospels, or in unwritten tra-
dition."

"dition." — The question is, From which of the three have these Fathers taken those passages? And, in my apprehension, as all the three are understood to be quite consistent, perfectly to agree together, and to carry with them an equal degree of authority, the question is wholly idle and to no purpose. Nor, in such circumstances, where all of them seem to be intitled to equal regard, can one approve of our noble Author's partiality, in preferring those other Gospels and unwritten tradition, before the books of the New Testament. At the same time, as no man has it now in his power to show the world those other Gospels, and to settle that unwritten tradition, it follows of course, from his Lordship's reasoning, that the only authentic history now remaining, concerning the blessed *Jesus*, is contained in the writings of our Evangelists and Apostles. Thus much might suffice. But as in defence of Christianity, one is frequently obliged to explain and inculcate the plainer truths, I shall a little consider this question according to the truth of history; and, in that view of things, give it an answer.

As the Fathers of the first century give not the most distant hint, make not the least mention of those other teachers or Gospels, from whence Lord *Bolingbroke* alledges they might transcribe some passages; so, as I have before observed, they always regarded the Apostles as the only persons immediately commissioned by *Jesus Christ* to preach the Gospel to mankind; they themselves had constant recourse to them; and they earnestly recommended it to all Christians steadily to adhere to their doctrines. Of necessity therefore it must be allowed, that what information or instruction these Fathers received from the mouths or the writings of the Apostles, those they could not but esteem incontestably true and authentic,

authentic, of such undoubted sovereign authority, that thereby the credit of all other teachers and Gospels must have been judged and determined (*e*). Unless, therefore, it can be supposed, in contradiction to the truth of history, that these Fathers equalled or preferred the authority of some other persons, to that of the Apostles of our Lord, it is certain, beyond question, that those passages mentioned by these Fathers, that are agreeable to what we read in our Evangelists, though they might be contained in other Gospels, are taken out of these same Evangelists. Not but that in some instances they might fetch passages from some other Gospels immediately. (Which does not seem to have happened any where (*f*), but in the second Epistle of *Clemens*, whose authenticity

(*e*) Non enim per alios dispositionem salutis nostræ cognovimus, quam per eos, per quos Evangelium pervenit ad nos: quod quidem tunc præconaverunt; postea vero per Dei voluntatem in Scripturis nobis tradiderunt, fundamentum et columnam fidei nostræ futurum. Irenæ. cont. Hæres. lib. 3. cap. 1.

(*f*) In his Epistle to the Smyrneans, Ignatius reports, that when Jesus came to Peter, and those with him, he said unto them, "Handle me and see that I am no incorporeal dæmon." This passage, St. Jerome tells us, Ignatius transcribed from the Gospel of the Hebrews. But as Eusebius, who had perused that Gospel, says expressly, that he knows not from whence Ignatius had it, (Eccles. Hist. lib. 3. cap. 36.) one may suspect that the copies of that Gospel were very different. And indeed it is thought to have had many additions made to it, whereof, perhaps, this may be counted one taken from Ignatius. For my part, when I consider that the antients, in their quotations, did frequently express the sense, without copying the precise words, I incline to think that this passage mentioned by Ignatius is taken from St. Luke xxiv. 39. For Ignatius having immediately before insinuated, that those Heretics who maintained, that "Christ suffered only in appearance," might as well be said to "exist only in appearance;" and that what they alledged concerning Christ, might as well be said to have happened to themselves, *viz.* "they

authenticity is suspected.) But, as therein they most undoubtedly had in their view the Gospels of our Evangelists, as the measure and standard of truth in the history of our Saviour, to which nothing contrary could be admitted; it may be said, in a large sense, that even such passages were copied from our Evangelists; at least, they copied them not without an eye to their approbation. So that, as the Fathers of the first century did always regard the instructions and writings of the Apostles to be of divine authority, one may safely say, that, from their mentioning some passages, that are agreeable to what we read in our Evangelists, it clearly follows, that these Fathers had the same Gospels before them. To say otherwise, is a manifest abuse of history, and quite inexcusable in Writers that knew, or should have known, that the Fathers of the first century did universally and firmly believe, that God sent *Christ*, and *Christ* sent his Apostles to publish his Gospel, and to instruct mankind in matters of religion.

But Lord *Bolingbroke* could almost venture to affirm, that these Fathers of the first century do not expressly name the Gospels we have of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John* (g). And his Lordship would have obliged the world, had he condescended to explain what he means by this observation. Does he mean, that the Gospels we now have did not appear during the first century, but are the production of the next, or of

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they are incorporeal and demoniac. ἀνωμάτοι γέ δαιμονιαχός, mere apparitions; he proceeds in the same language, and instead of the Evangelist's words, Ψηλαφίσατε με, γέ ίδετε, ὅτι πνευμα σάρκα γέ ούσια εύχεται, in order to render the truth, in the present case, more striking, he very naturally expresses himself thus, Ψηλαφίσατε με, γέ ίδετε, ὅτι εύχεται δαιμόνιον αἰώνιατον.

(g) Ub. sup. p. 178.

some later age? In this case, indeed, the Fathers of the first century could not have our Gospels before them. But that these Gospels were then extant, all antiquity declares: And his Lordship's almost venturing to affirm the contrary, can be regarded by no man. Or does he mean, that the Fathers of the first century do not particularly distinguish the Gospels we now have by the names of those Evangelists to whom they are severally ascribed? Herein, I confess, his observation is just, with respect to *Barnabas*, *Clemens*, *Ignatius*, and *Polycarp*; but *Papias* expressly names the Gospels of *Mattbew* and *Mark*. But, because so many of these Fathers do not mention the Gospels under the names of the particular Evangelists who wrote them, would this noble Writer have it to follow, that our Evangelists are not the Authors of these Gospels? This again is wholly repugnant to the express evidence of all antiquity. I have instanced in *Papias* and *Irenæus*, in the Heretics of the first century, the testimony is uniform and constant, without interruption, to the present time.

Nor, in my opinion, would it greatly forward his Lordship's design, should it be granted, that *Mattbew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, *John*, are not the Authors of these Gospels that go under their name. Indeed, our knowing, and our not knowing the name, the character and circumstances of an Author, have, each of them, their advantages and disadvantages: As in the present case, and in other instances, I am afraid, the name of Lord *Bolingbroke* may have a bad influence over some people, and blind or harden their minds against reason and truth. But, by whatever name an Historian may be designed, call him *Livy*, or *Tacitus*, or what you will; or let him be distinguished by no name; it is, most certainly, from his writings that

that we settle his character, or satisfy ourselves as to his knowledge, his sense and judgment, his truth and veracity. Whoever, therefore, were the Authors of the Gospels ascribed to our Evangelists, their writings declare them knowing, sensible, judicious Historians, in every article dispassionate, unbiased, and faithful. Each of them is every-where consistent with himself: They are all consilient with one another: And they agree with the other Historians of those days, as to the circumstances of the world at that time, in what relates either to civil or sacred matters. In particular, they relate the great articles of the Gospel, the birth, the life, the miracles and doctrines, the passion, the resurrection, and ascension of *Jesus*, the foundations of the whole system, much more fully indeed, but after the same manner, wherein they are related in the Epistles of St. *Paul*, which, Lord *Bolingbroke* could not but know, were early published, and in the writings of the Fathers of the first century. So that although one should be able to prove, that the Gospels, however worthy of our Evangelists, must have been composed by some other persons; yet this will very little help the cause of infidelity, unless one shall proceed further, and make it appear, that, whoever were the Authors of these Gospels, they are forged and fabulous.

That which has afforded a handle to Lord *Bolingbroke*, thus to misrepresent the Gospels of our Evangelists, seems to be the Fathers of the first century their never expressly naming those particular Evangelists, from whose Gospels they have inserted in their writings several passages. And indeed this, to us, who follow another custom in our quotations, may seem somewhat surprising: But, if we attend to the method observed by the antients, it will appear not quite so strange. In the writings of the New Testament,

Testament, there are many passages from the Old ; but very frequently the particular Authors or books from whence those passages are taken, are not named. After the same manner, in the writings of the Fathers of the first century, the Passages from the Old Testament are very numerous, yet very rarely do these Fathers expressly name the Authors from whom they transcribe them. Their common method is, to introduce their citations by some such general expressions, “ It is written ;” “ The Scripture de-
“ clares, &c.” And as sometimes they insert pas-
sages without any reference, so they frequently mix
or join together, not only several distant passages of
the same Author, but several passages of different Au-
thors, without any distinction. Besides, that with-
out copying the precise words, they often content
themselves with giving the sense, either in more or
in fewer terms. After this manner, any one who
has read them with attention, cannot but know, the
Fathers of the first century managed their quotations
from the Old Testament. When therefore, in their
writings, we meet with passages that are agreeable
to what we read, or that are contained in the New
Testament ; as in quoting those passages they only
follow their common course, it is impossible that their
not expressly naming the particular Authors from
whom they have those passages, can be any good
reason for our suspecting they had them somewhere
else than from the Authors of the New Testament.
Not to mention many instances, although *Polycarp*
names not the Author, yet every body will allow,
Lord *Bolingbroke* himself would not deny, that this
passage, *Neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor
abusers of themselves with mankind, shall inherite
the kingdom of God,* is taken from St. *Paul's*
first Epistle to the *Corinthians*. And when the same
Polycarp,

Polycarp, without naming the Author who reports it, tells us, that our Lord said, *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*, have we not equal reason to rest assured, that this passage was certainly taken from St. *Mattbew's* Gospel? The possibility, for probability there is none, of *Polycarp's* having taken this passage from another Gospel, can no more induce me to suspect, that he had it not from St. *Mattbew*, than, for the same reason, I can be induced to suspect, that *Pliny* had not these lines from *Virgil*,

— *Si qua me quoque possum*
Tollere humo —
— *Victorque virūm volitare per ora.*
Quanquam O —

Or that *Jamblicus* did not transcribe from *Porphyry* several passages in his life of *Pythagoras*.

I shall conclude with again observing, although the Fathers of the first century made use of other Gospels, and from those Gospels might have taken some passages; yet this can in no degree infringe the credit of the New Testament; on the contrary, it tends to establish its authority, as betwixt these Fathers, and the passages they may be thought to have transcribed from other Gospels, and the writings of our Evangelists, there is an exact harmony and agreement; and all of them concur together in confirming the truth of the Gospel-history.

But the authenticity of the Gospel-history, is not the only thing to which Lord *Bolingbroke* is pleased to object. His Lordship objects likewise to the sufficiency or perfection of the Scriptures. He goes along with the church of *Rome*, and apprehends, " That the Writers of the *Roman* religion have shewn, that the text of Holy Writ is, on many accounts,

“ accounts, insufficient to be the sole *criterion* of orthodoxy.” And at the same time observing, “ That the Writers of the reformed religion have erected their batteries against tradition, which, the Papists are of opinion, must necessarily be added to the Scriptures, in order to make up a perfect standard whereby to judge of orthodoxy.” He tells the world, “ That each side has been employed to weaken the cause, and explode the system of his adversary.” And whilst they have been so employed, “ They have jointly laid their axes to the root of Christianity.” And in this view of things, I doubt not but his Lordship must have been highly entertained, whilst he observed Papists wresting the Scriptures out of the hands of Protestants ; and Protestants forcing Papists out of their traditions ; and thus betwixt the two, the foundations torn up, and the whole structure overthrown. It does not belong to my present argument to take notice of any such objections. But, as this objection is so noisy as to conclude in a *terrible dilemma*, I cannot altogether neglect it.

This noble Author apprehends, that upon what Papists and Protestants, one against the Scriptures, and the other against tradition, have advanced, men may be apt to reason thus : “ If the Text has not that authenticity, clearness, and precision, which are necessary to establish it as a divine and a certain rule of faith and practice ; and if the tradition of the church, from the first ages of it till the days of *Luther* and *Calvin*, has been corrupted itself, and has served to corrupt the faith and practice of Christians, there remains at this time no standard at all of Christianity. By consequence, either this religion was not originally of divine institution, or else God has not provided effectually

“ ally

" ally for preserving the genuine purity of it, and
" the gates of hell have actually prevailed, in con-
" tradiction to his promise, against the church.
" The best effect of this reasoning that can be hoped
" for, is that men should fall into Theism, and sub-
" scribe to the first proposition: He must be worse
" than an Atheist who can affirm the last. The di-
" lemma is terrible. Party-zeal and private interest
" have formed it (*b*)."
What his Lordship here means, when he tells us, that party-zeal and private interest have formed this *dilemma*, I am not able to understand. One would think, that by this way of expressing himself, he lays the foundation of his *terrible dilemma*, not in the holy Scriptures themselves, but in the passions and prejudices of men, who abuse the Scriptures, and by their party-zeal and private interest pervert them to their own purposes. But whether herein the Reader may apprehend any inconsistency or not, that which here leads our noble Author to reduce Christianity to this dilemma, is his avowed opinion, that the Writers of the *Roman* church have made good their plea against the sufficiency of the Scriptures. And must we again enter the lists with the church of *Rome*, and repeat over the demonstrations of the vanity of tradition, and of the sufficiency of the holy Scriptures? I shall only observe, his Lordship either does not understand, or he is pleased to misrepresent, this controversy, the great pillar that bears the whole weight of his *dilemma*.

The church of *Rome* do by no means question the authenticity of the Scriptures; on the contrary, by their open and avowed confession, the Scriptures are true and genuine, and were given the world by the inspiration of God. They have indeed among them

a great

a great many articles of faith and practice, that are far, very far from having any foundation in the sacred Text. And therefore that those articles may bear the stamp of divine authority, they have recourse to tradition, alledging, that besides the doctrines taught by our Saviour and his Apostles, whereof we have an account in the Scriptures, there were a great many other articles delivered to the world by the same authority, which none of the Apostles committed to writing, but left to be handed down by oral tradition. So that, very consistently with their having adopted a number of tenets wholly repugnant to the truths of the Gospel, it is maintained by the church of *Rome*, that the Scriptures, without tradition, are no sufficient rule of faith and manners. But how very uncertain and deceitful tradition is in conveying the knowledge, particularly of points of doctrine, every considerate man must be sensible. It has been demonstrated by learned men, and, in real fact, nothing can be more certain, than that the tradition of the church, from the first ages of it till the days of *Luther* and *Calvin*, has been corrupted itself, and has served to corrupt the faith and practice of Christians, and is still exerting its baneful influence, in an especial manner, over the church of *Rome*. But, without mentioning the treacherous hold that a man has in depending upon tradition, it is apparent, that those doctrines concerning purgatory, the praying and saying of masses for the dead, the worshiping of angels and saints, the adoration of images and reliques, &c. which they pretend are derived from tradition, are incapable of being the matter of any divine revelation, and by no miracles whatsoever can they be proved to come from God. So that neither tradition, nor the doctrines therein said to be conveyed as divine or necessary articles

articles of faith and practice, ought at all to be regarded. And happy would it be for the world, did all Christian churches devote themselves wholly to the heavenly purity and manly simplicity of the Gospel of Christ, and totally abandon not only Idolatry, but all the worldly mixtures, all the vain pageantry and childish amusements of will-worship and superstition.

But Lord Bolingbroke supports his *terrible dilemma* upon this other pretence : “ The Text,” says he, “ has not that clearness and precision that are necessary to establish it as a divine and certain rule of faith and practice.” Which in order to confirm, he makes this observation : “ Sure I am,” says his Lordship, “ that experience, from the first promulgation of the Gospel to this hour, shews abundantly with how much ease and success the most opposite, the most extravagant, nay, the most impious opinions, and the most contradictory faiths, may be founded on the same Text, and plausibly defended by the same authority (i):” In all this, indeed, our noble Author conspires with the church of *Rome*, who maintain the same doctrine, thereby meaning to justify their opinion concerning the infallibility of their church, either in Pope or Council, and their not suffering the people to read the Scriptures. But, as the clearness and precision of the sacred Text have been unanswerably made out, and I am not now concerned with such questions; I shall here only observe, that the Christian revelation being understood to come from heaven, in order to instruct mankind in the true measures of real happiness in both worlds, one may reasonably expect, that all the articles of faith and practice necessary to that purpose, shall be clearly proposed to

the world and without ambiguity, in such a manner as every man of common sense, who attends to things of that nature, may be able to apprehend them. That this is the real case with respect to articles of practice, or of moral conduct, all comprehended in the love of God and the love of our neighbour, is beyond contradiction. And what is the article of faith, which the Scriptures make necessary to salvation, that an attentive mind cannot confess is revealed clearly, and with accuracy and precision?

The Creed of Christians is that which they commonly call the Apostles. Every article is expressly taught in Scripture, and to a common understanding they are plain and obvious, neither obscure nor ambiguous (*k*). I confess, that going beyond the bounds of revelation, and launching out into the abstruse disquisitions of philosophy, we may find ourselves entangled in inextricable difficulties. And when people, in the vanity of philosophising, or under the power of enthusiasm or superstition, or of any blind impetuous passion, party-zeal or private interest, forsake the sober dictates of reason and revelation,

(*k*) This article, “He descended into hell,” is, in our language, obscure and doubtful; but understood from the original Text, Act. ii. 27. 31. upon which it is founded, it is clear and precise; *κατελειφθη ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ εἰς Αὐδονίαν*: It plainly imports, “He went into the state of other dead men,” or, “Into ‘the place of departed souls,’ which expressly declares the reality of his death.

*Εἶπεν ἔτι ζώει, καὶ ὅρα φάσις μελίσσοι,
Ηγένη τεθύνει, καὶ εἰν Αἰδανοῖς δομοῖσι.*

Odyss. iv.

Ἐτὶ μόι τις ὁδός δύο δεῖξεν, τὸν μὲν εἰς Αὐδονίαν φέρεσσαν, τὸν δὲ ἐπὶ τὸ βῆμα, ἥδιον ἄν τὸν ἐπέραν ἥλσον τὴν ἐυδὺ τὸ Αὐδονίαν.
Ælian. Var. hist. lib. 9. cap. 18.

velation, that are always consistent together, and go about to explain the Scriptures by their own prejudices, they may pretend to found on the sacred Text doctrines the most opposite and contradictory, and the most extravagant and impious. But every sober and considerate man, thinking freely and without bias, must easily discern, that the ravings of vain philosophy, or the infatuations of enthusiasm or superstition, or the suggestions of irregular passions, can neither be well founded on the sacred Text, nor plausibly defended by that authority.

Indeed, sober and considerate men do differ with one another in matters of religion, and sometimes in articles that may be thought of high concernment. But I verily believe, that, in all questions, where the differing parties have distinct and determined ideas, their differences are owing, not to their thinking differently, (unless when they apprehend the same object in different lights, altogether consistent with one another,) but to their speaking a different language. And as to those questions, wherein our distinct perceptions fail us, and we are able to form no precise and determined ideas, which of necessity must happen, when we presumptuously take upon us to explain the way and manner of the existence of things, which, in no instance, whether it concerns body or mind, we are able to comprehend; these learned men, otherwise sober, talking very learnedly in metaphysical language, or in a particular set of school-phrases, whilst in their minds they are all darkness and confusion, cannot but clash and interfere with each other. As therefore those controversies among Christians, concerning what are counted the most important doctrines of the sacred Text, do manifestly relate to the way and manner of the existence of things; such differences cannot be justly charged upon the Scriptures,

Scriptures, but ought to be imputed to the pride and presumption of human minds that set up to be wise beyond the sphere of reason, and above that which is written in the Word of God.

For my part, I know of no sort of difficulties that attend the objects of the Christian revelation, that do not likewise attend the objects of natural religion. So that to fly to Theism, as Lord *Bolingbroke* directs us, for relief from the difficulties of Christianity, will not free and disengage us ; even there we shall find ourselves involved in endless disputes, and in unsurmountable difficulties. How grossly ignorant the Heathen were of the principles of Theism, the being and perfections of God, and the immortality of the soul, I have fully explained in my *Inquiry into the Extent of Human Powers with respect to Matters of Religion* ; where the Reader may see the most opposite, the most extravagant, nay, the most impious opinions, and the most contradictory faiths, professed and defended by all the learned Theists of the Heathen world. Here I speak of mankind enlightened, from the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, with the knowledge of the true God. And in this enlightened state, after what manner, for example, the perfections of God are exerted in the creation and government of the universe, is among speculative men, a great question ; it has been warmly debated ; it is not yet, nor, in the present state of humanity, will it ever be decided. In general, I can say, that in giving scope to one's inquiries, how things exist in the divine mind, and how they are produced and directed, one comes to be overwhelmed with difficulties, without any hopes of being extricated. But with what difficulties soever such speculations may perplex and oppress me, and which in no degree I am able to dissipate, as they manifestly arise from the narrowness of my mind,

mind, or from the incomprehensibility of the divine nature ; they can never, at any rate, determine me to reject what I know assuredly, either from reason or revelation, concerning that infinite Being : Otherwise I should be hurried away into universal Scepticism, against which Lord *Bolingbroke* openly declares. Thus, in my apprehension, the matter stands in the case of Theism, among sober, speculative persons.

But, as in no case it is possible to prevent the extravagancies of human nature, what his Lordship observes with respect to the same text of Scripture, may be observed likewise with respect to the divine perfections : And this noble Author could not but know, that the most opposite, the most extravagant, nay, the most impious opinions, and the most contradictory faiths, are founded on the same perfections of God, and defended by the same authority. Thus, from the goodness, and the wisdom, and the power of God, some people take upon them to prove, "There is no moral evil, no sin or wickedness in the world, and therefore no punishment for sin either here or hereafter (*l*)!" Nor is there any thing more common, than for mankind to measure God by themselves, and to bring him to their standard. Most certainly the disposition of human nature is the same now that it was formerly, when sinners had the folly to think, *That God was altogether such a one as themselves* (*m*). And every body knows, that the passions of men, among which party-zeal and private interest are none of the least powerful,

(*l*) Vid. *The State of the Moral World considered, &c.* By W. D. where this doctrine is avowedly maintained.

(*m*) Psal. I. 21. *Nemo novit Deum. Multi de illo male existimant, et impune.* Senec. Epist. 31.

powerful, are capable of darkening and confounding the plainest truths, whether natural or revealed :

Jupiter esse pium statuit, quodcumque juvaret.

As therefore such general reflections seem sufficient to oppose to the general objection here offered ; and Lord *Balingbroke's* bare opinion can never shake my confidence, that the Scriptures, without tradition, are a sufficient rule of faith and practice; that the doctrines therein necessary to salvation are clear and precise, obvious to the understanding of every honest mind that attends to them ; and that the difficulties that seem to perplex them, concern the way and manner of the existence of things, and take their rise from the fond speculations of idle Schoolmen and Philosophers, in which sort of difficulties Theism likewise greatly abounds ; it appears to me, that his Lordship's *terrible dilemma* is mere empty noise, that can disturb no man in his Christian faith, or prevent his resting assured, that God has provided effectually for preserving the genuine purity of the Gospel, and that the gates of hell have not yet, and never will prevail, in contradiction to his promise, against it.

If the Reader will reflect upon the dark ages of the church, when the whole Western world were sunk in the deepest ignorance ; when they were intirely over-run with barbarism and bigotry ; when Princes and people, the souls and bodies of men, were under the domination of the Popes of Rome, who, as the head of the church of God, and the vicars of *Jesus Christ*, had usurped the disposal of both worlds ; and, in this sovereign character, not only deposed Princes, and absolved subjects from their obedience, interdicted

interdicted whole nations, and gave away kingdoms at their pleasure; but published bulls and decrees establishing the objects of worship, the doctrines, the religious rites and ceremonies, which mankind should believe and observe with respect to God, and saints, and images, and another world; at the same time pardoning sins, relieving from purgatory, and condemning to hell, or admitting to heaven, whom they pleased; I say, if the Reader will reflect upon those dark ages of the church, wherein the souls and bodies of men, as to the concernments of both worlds, were thus absolutely enslaved to the Popes of *Rome* and their Clergy, and at the same time consider, that the best and surest ground upon which such wild daring usurpations could be founded, would have been (what they might have called) the Holy Scriptures; and that, in those circumstances of the world, there was nothing to oppose, but every thing to favour their having them so founded; must it not be owing to the vigilancy of Providence over the sacred Text, preventing all dangerous and fatal attempts, that none of the *Roman* Pontiffs (as they still affect to call them) did ever take upon them to employ their infallibility, their sovereign uncontroulable power, in new-moulding the Scriptures, and in corrupting and perverting them, by omissions and additions, to their unhallowed purposes.

We see, that, after those days of thick darkness, when their absurd antifcriptural tenets came to be called into question, the Popes, and their Clergy, have strained every art, and done all in their power to wrest and force the Scriptures, as they now stand, to teach and maintain their doctrines and usurpations; for which purpose likewise, their Missals and Breviaries are stuffed with extravagant falsehoods and absurdities. And, not to speak of that strange attempt,

their

their Index Expurgatory ; we see, that, in their versions of the Scriptures into the modern tongues, they have so managed and turned the sacred Text, as to make the world believe, that their canonizations, their processions, their pilgrimages, their masses, or their sacrifice of the mass, &c. are the plain and express doctrines of the New Testament (*m*). As therefore all this management manifestly betrays a violent disposition to falsify the sacred Text, according as one's purposes may require it, I cannot, I say, but think, that, whilst the Popes of *Rome* had all power in heaven and earth, and it was of the last consequence so to exert it, their having made no attempt to forge the Scriptures anew, or so to vamp them as they might have fully justified all their usurpations, must be attributed to the watchful care of Providence, preserving the sacred Text from all such adulterations and mixtures, as would have quite altered its inward frame, and rendered it wholly disproportioned to its original design. Besides, that in those times of universal darkness and ignorance, when few of the Clergy were able to read *Latin*, or knew

(*m*) Vid. Sercei. Popery an enemy to Scripture. In his critical history of the New Testament, chap. 31. F. Simon observes concerning le P. Veron, comme il estoit controverſiste de profession, il a ajouté quelques paſſages à ses Idées, comme quand il a voulu trouver la mesſe au chap. xiii. des Actes, vers. 2, ou il traduit, Les Apoſtres celebroient la mesſe au ſeigneur.—Ce n'est pas que Veron ſoit le premier qui ait traduit de cette maniere. Corbin, qui pour l'ordinaire eſt barbare, parce qu'il rend trop à la lettré les paroles de la Vulgate, a néanmoins traduit avant lui, Eux celebraſſent la sainte ſacrifice de la mesſe. Upon which I cannot but transcribe this learned Critic's judicious remark concerning ſuch as would translate the Bible : Il eſt vray, says he, qu'il feroit à deſirer que ceux qui fe mêlent de traduire la Bible fuſſent ſçavans dans la theologie : mais ce doit être une autre theologie que celle qui regarde la controverſe ; car il arrive ſouvent que les controverſistes voyent dans la Bible les choses qui n'y font point, & qu'ils limitent quelquefois les mots ſelon leurs idées. Ibid.

knew what was contained in the Old or New Testament, as even then, some particular men were disposed to employ their time in comparing the different copies of the Bible published in former ages, and in transcribing the Scriptures in the most unbiased and the correctest manner, with a faithful account of the various readings, the readiest way to settle the true meaning of the text, and a mighty security against all frauds and innovations ; may not this be counted a further proof of the particular care of Providence, to preserve the genuine purity of the Gospel, and to make good his promise, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (n) ?

Upon the whole, I shall observe ; as it may be justly said, that whilst the book of nature (the works of Creation and Providence) is preserved, mankind, rightly informed of the nature of things, have access to learn the principles of natural religion ; so with equal reason it may be affirmed, that whilst the books of the Scriptures is preserved, mankind, free of prejudice, and sincerely desiring to do the will of God, have access to learn the principles of the Christian institution : And as the differences, the errors and absurdities, the impious opinions, and the contradictory faiths, into which people fall, from their misunderstanding the works of Creation and Providence, can never infringe the authority of the religion of nature ; so neither can the differences, the errors and absurdities, the impious opinions, and the

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contradictory

(n) C'est une chose surprenante, que ces livres de Critique qui avoient été composés par des Ecrivains Latins, dans un temps que la Barbarie regnoit dans l'Europe, soient devenus si rares, qu'ils n'ayent été vus que de très-peu de personnes. Il est difficile d'en trouver aujourd'hui dans les meilleures bibliothèques ; ce qu'on ne peut attribuer, ce me semble, qu'à la theologie scholaistique qui survint peu de temps après. Id. ibid. chap. 9.

contradictory faith, that people fall into, from their misunderstanding the holy Scriptures, at any rate infringe the authority of the religion of Jesus.

But is it not a little surprising how this noble Writer has come to confound Christianity with Popery! why he insists upon it, “ That the resurrection of letters was a fatal period to the Christian system, that Christianity has been attacked and wounded too very severely, and has been in decay ever since that time.” I say, is it possible his Lordship could have had any thing here in his eye but the Romish religion, a system of religion utterly inconsistent with that of the Gospel? The resurrection of letters was most certainly the reviving of Christianity; or rather, the reviving of Christianity awakened a spirit of inquiry, brought in upon the world a most glorious light that scattered the thick clouds of idolatry, superstition and ignorance, wherein mankind had been long overwhelmed; and illuminating the human mind, pointed out the paths of all useful knowledge.

But these articles do not come within the compass of my present design. I hope I have made out what I intended, that the only particular objection offered by Lord *Bolingbroke* to the authenticity of the Gospel-history, is without all foundation; and that his Lordship’s argument serves plainly to establish the contrary. So that, in confirmation of the truth of the history of the Gospel, to the testimony of Heathen Writers, I have now added the testimony of the Fathers of the first century, which testimony has been uniformly continued to the present time. And where is the history, whose authenticity is supported upon clearer, and fuller, and stronger evidence?

S E C T. III.

Vindicating the Gospel-history, particularly with respect to the Resurrection of Jesus, from the Charge of Contradiction and Forgery.

BUT all this evidence, of more than a thousand years standing, comes at length to be overthrown, in the opinion of one of our late moral Philosophers, as those self-sufficient Gentlemen, who despise revelation, now affect to call themselves. This Gentleman sets up to answer, *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus*, and means to shew, that the Gospel-history, as to that essential article of Christianity, is full of contradictions and inconsistencies, and must therefore be counted a forgery. So that I must beg leave to detain the Reader a little longer, whilst I consider this moral Philosopher's objections, and examine how far they are to be regarded. And, with this view, I judge it proper to lay down the following axioms :

1. As every man's life, especially of such as appear in any public character, is made up of a great variety of actions or events; and one cannot well expect in history, that every one of those events shall be recorded by one hand; so it is wholly in the choice and at the discretion of an Historian, what particular events or actions in any man's life shall be published to the world. When therefore different Historians take notice of different events, one cannot from hence immediately conclude, that those Historians disagree or contradict one another, and cannot therefore be credited.

2. After

2. After the same manner, as a great action, or a considerable event, may be attended with a great many circumstances, or with a variety of other collateral actions or events; so it lying at the discretion of an Historian, what particular circumstances, or which of those collateral events shall be reported, when different Historians, agreeing as to the main action, happen to relate only different circumstances, or some other collateral actions or events; from hence immediately to infer, that those Historians contradict one another, and the main event is a forgery, is extremely absurd and unreasonable.

3. Again, as it intirely depends upon the judgment and choice of an Historian, what particular actions shall be transmitted to posterity; so no Historian is bound to relate those events and actions in the same order wherein they happened or were transacted, but is at full liberty to represent them, as in his apprehension they may seem connected in their own nature, or as his own particular taste and view of things may direct him. However, therefore, different Historians may report actions or events differently connected, yet by no means does it from hence immediately follow, that those Historians contradict one another, and their account of things is meerly fabulous.

The Reader perhaps will imagine, that I very needlessly take notice of these axioms universally known and admitted in understanding history, or in judging of the truth and connection of events. But these axioms I chuse here to offer to the Reader's attention, that he may see the foundation, upon which I propose to justify the character of the Gospel-Historians, and to demonstrate the falseness of that charge of contradiction.

diction and forgery, which this Gentleman is pleased to bring against them. Nor can I suffer myself to suspect, that any man will question the truth of these axioms, because they are employed in the service of revelation. They are regarded and held good every where else, and why not equally good in the present argument?

The method this Gentleman pursues in his attempt to prove the Apostles guilty of imposture, in publishing the resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, is this: He first takes notice of some things relating to the resurrection, that are said to have passed before the crucifixion: He then considers some articles reported to have happened while the body was lifeless, and in the power of death: And, last of all, he examines into the evidence itself, upon which the Apostles do admit the truth of the resurrection, and recommend it to the belief of mankind. I shall follow him in this method, and represent things no otherwise than as common sense and honesty, in understanding any history, shall direct me. And, as I hate to deal in any thing that suits not the character of a lover of truth, or that bears the face of buffoonry, I will meddle nothing with those impertinent reflections, or that impious raillery, with which our Philosopher gives himself leave to disgrace his argument. Nor will I trouble the Reader with all the little blunders, wherein he gives one the advantage over him.

In the first place, He undertakes to show, that those predictions alledged to have been made by *Jesus*, concerning his resurrection, are all forgery. And in order to make good this heavy charge, he begins with an attempt to prove, that the Evangelist *Mattew* reports a falsehood, when he tells us, that *the chief Priests and Pbarisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that this deceiver*

ceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again.

Here, I say, our Philosopher does not mean to charge the chief Priests and Pharisees with so unrighteous a thing, as their going to *Pontius Pilate* with a lie in their mouth. No, These are men of great uprightness and integrity, whose conscience, for the world, would not suffer them to speak a falsehood. Nor, in all the Gentleman's righteous performance, will you find one syllable to their disadvantage. His design is, "to convince those that believe they see, or that see only thro' faith's optics, that their blindness remaineth. It is to cover the dignity of virtue, to promote that veneration for wisdom and truth, which has been debased and degraded by faith (a)." And, to a mind so piously affected, how can the Apostles of our Saviour appear any other but vile impostors, who, for more than these 1700 years, have been deceiving the world, and might have gone on to the end of time in the cheat, had not this moral Philosopher, concerned for the good of mankind, and animated with an ardent love of truth, undertaken a fair inquiry, and happily detected the forgery. Here, therefore, we are told, that the whole of this address to *Pilate*, reported to have been made by the chief Priests and Pharisees is meer fiction, and only put in their mouth by the Evangelist *Mattew*, while in truth they never did make any such application. This is the Gentleman's opinion, with respect to an antient matter of fact, never before by any man contradicted. And in a charge so heavy and singular, it can be thought no unreasonable thing, to expect and require proportional evidence.

As to this, we may trust our moral Philosopher's honesty,

(a) p. 72.

honesty, for producing all he is able to afford us, and rely upon his penetration, far superior to that of any former Infidel, for discovering whatever can arise from the thing itself. "Now, says he, the words, *we remember*, signify that they heard him say so. "But I find no account where, or when such public prophesy was delivered before the Priests and Pharisees, in any of the four Evangelists (*b*)."
 Nay, "none of the Evangelists give the least hint, that Jesus ever publicly declared to the Priests, Scribes, Pharisees or Sadducees, that *after three days he would rise again*; nor when or where he had made such declaration, or any thing like it, that plainly predicted his resurrection to them; so that this report wants confirmation, even among the Evangelists themselves (*c*)."
 This is the mighty evidence whereby our moral Philosopher would prove a forgery upon the Evangelist *Matthew*. It all rests upon a particular meaning, which he forces upon the word *remember*; as if, in common language, one cannot say, he *remembers* what another person said, without his having heard that other person say so. I am apt to think our Philosopher can say, he *remembers* that *Cicero* said, *Nihil tam absurde dici potest quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum*; and yet pretends not to have heard *Cicero* say so. And may not the Pharisees be allowed likewise to say, *we remember Jesus said, after three days I will rise again*, though they never did hear *Jesus* say so? This sort of criticism shews the world, to what mean shifts the Gentleman is reduced, in order to justify his charge of forgery. If therefore he will be so good as to make it appear, that the chief Priests and Pharisees heard as little from other people, as he alledges they did from *Jesus* himself, concerning his resurrection, the world may then come

(*b*) p. 15.(*c*) p. 19.

come to judge more favourably of his accusation. Mean while, in attempting a thing of this nature, our Philosopher would do well to remember, that as the chief Priests and Pharisees did always narrowly watch *Jesus*, had their spies continually about him, and at length prevailed upon one of his own Disciples to betray him, who was as able to inform them, as they were willing to understand whatever our Saviour, in any instance, either said or did; it seems impossible, if ever on any occasion he foretold his resurrection, but they must have heard of the prediction. And can any thing be conceived more natural than for *Judas*, while he was acting the traitor, to put the chief Priests and Pharisees upon their guard, warning them, particularly to look after the dead body, for that *Jesus* had declared, that *the third day he would rise again*. And having such information, might they not, with great propriety, have expressed themselves in the manner they did in their address to *Pilate*?

But, in consequence of his learned criticism, our Philosopher having undergone so much hard labour in proving, that in all the Gospel-history not the least hint is given to the Priests and Pharisees, concerning the resurrection of *Jesus*; it may be deemed not so civil, to take no notice of what has cost the Gentleman so much pains. Let it then be granted, that " we find no account, where, or when, any public prophesy, concerning the resurrection of *Jesus*, was delivered before the Priests and Pharisees, in any of the four Evangelists :" Is it a rule in our Philosopher's logic, that from hence it necessarily follows, that nothing of this nature ever happened? If, indeed, he will condescend to demonstrate, that every particular declaration made by *Jesus* to the chief Priests and Pharisees, is recorded in one

one or other of the four Evangelists, he will then have produced some evidence, upon which his charge of forgery against the Evangelist *Matthew* may be better founded: But, till he has obliged the world with something of this nature, every equitable judge will give it against him. And, most certainly, it would be extremely hard to find an Historian guilty of forgery, merely because, while he represents some people to say they heard such a particular, he gives no account where, or when, that particular was delivered in their hearing. So that, even granting it does not appear from any of the four Evangelists, where, or when, *Jesus* foretold his resurrection to the chief Priests and Pharisees, this is far from being any certain proof, that such a prediction was never made to them. Nor does our Philosopher himself seem quite clear and positive in the matter.

"None of the Evangelists, says he, give the least hint, that *Jesus* ever *publicly* declared to the Priests, and plainly predicted his resurrection." *Publicly* and plainly. Pray, what does the Gentleman mean by these words——by putting the former in *Italic*, and thereby recommending it to our notice? If he means, that the Evangelists have given some hints, that *Jesus* privately declared such an event, or darkly or parabolically predicted it to the chief Priests and Pharisees, may not either of these serve to satisfy us, that the Rulers of the *Jews* had particular information from *Jesus* concerning his resurrection? The Gentleman seems apprehensive, that something of this nature may be intimated in the sign of *Jonas* the Prophet, which our Saviour promises the *Jews* should have: And therefore is he at so much pains, by so many silly reflections, to convince his Reader, that no such thing can be understood by it. And yet our Philosopher does not ab-

solutely aver, that this sign of the Prophet *Jonah*, as it stands in St. *Matthew*, gives no intimation to the chief Priests and Pharisees of the resurrection; He only says, “The words are ambiguous, and do not “plainly (or pointedly) indicate a resurrection. “So that the Rulers could not certainly (or assured-“ly) know by this, that *Jesus* was to die, and rise “again (d).” Well then, by the Gentleman’s own confession, the chief Priests and Pharisees seem to have had some public hints, not indeed absolutely clear and precise, but such as might lead them to suspect, that *Jesus* meant to let them know, he was to die, and the third day to rise again. And even but a slight suspicion of this nature, every considerate man will allow, was sufficient ground, a very good reason, for the chief Priests and Pharisees to make the address they did to *Pontius Pilate*. But I am apt to think, that the Pharisees had more than a suspicion as to our Saviour’s meaning in this sign of *Jonas* the Prophet.

“The words (says the Gentleman) are ambigu-“ous, and do not plainly indicate a resurrection.” But of this ambiguity, the Pharisees, I hope, must have been as sensible as our Philosopher is. And, not to speak of the force of meer curiosity, in a matter wherein a resemblance to one of their own Prophets is foretold, would those men who were so keen to watch every word and every action of our Saviour, and wanted only an opportunity to ruin him; would those men have no concern to strip the words of their ambiguity, and search out their precise and determined meaning? The blessed *Jesus* did not shun their conversation; they discoursed familiarly with him; in what things they wanted to be informed,

informed, they freely propounded their questions ; nay, sometimes they went so far as to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things ; laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him (e) : And having been frequently referred to this sign of the Prophet *Zonab*, as something very considerable, which they might expect as decisive of *Jesus's* character ; if they understood it not, would not those men, either out of curiosity or malice, be prompted to discover what our Saviour particularly meant by it ?

But how comes our Philosopher to tell us, “ The words are ambiguous, and do not plainly indicate a resurrection ? ” Does he pretend to measure the understanding of the chief Priests and Pharisees, in what relates to some particular phrases and ways of speaking in their own language, by the manner in which he thinks he would understand them ? The blessed *Jesus* makes this open declaration before the people of *Jerusalem* ; *And I*, says our Lord, *wben I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me* (f). Now, possibly the Gentleman may imagine, that the precise meaning of this prediction of our Saviour, is not to be understood ; or he may call it ambiguous, and a prophetic riddle. And yet the multitude so well understood it, that therein, in their apprehension, *Jesus* contradicted himself, or gave up the character to which he had hitherto pretended. *We have heard*, say they, *out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever. And how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lift up ? Who is this Son of man ?* And the multitude so readily apprehending the meaning of those ambiguous words, that mysterious and prophetic riddle, as our Philosopher might call it,

(e) Luke xi. 53, 54.

(f) John xii. 32, 34.

it, concerning the crucifixion of Jesus, may not the Rulers of the Jews, the Pharisees, be allowed as much sagacity, or as much knowledge of their own language, as to enable them to perceive the meaning of this other mysterious and prophetic riddle, more obvious, one should think, to human understanding, relating not only to the death, but the resurrection of Jesus. *As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* Such forms of speech, familiar to the Jews, could have in them neither ambiguity nor mystery. In the case of the Egyptian, whom David's men found in the field, we are told, that this young man *had eaten no bread, nor drunk water, three days and three nights:* And yet, on the third day of his sickness, (*I fell sick, says he, and this is the third day* (g),) *they gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water.* When therefore our Saviour tells the Jews, that he was to be *three days and three nights in the heart of the earth,* as they could not but understand their own language, they certainly understood him to mean, that *he was to die, and the third day to rise again.* So that the sign of the Prophet Jonas could be no mystery, no prophetic riddle, to the rulers of the Jews; it was expressed in their common language, and they could not mistake its meaning. And this our Philosopher himself cannot but acknowledge, if he stands to his own reasoning.

“ None of the Evangelists,” says he, “ mention the explanation annexed to the parable of Jonab, but St. Matthew once. And as he had more occasion for a prophecy of this nature than the others

(g) 1 Sam. xxx. 13. חִלִּיתִי רֵיָם שְׁלֹשָׁה

" thers had, to confirm his story of the watch and seal, which none of the others say any thing of ; so, he adds something more than they do, to this, which is called a prophesy, but is rather a prophetic riddle (*b*)."
In which, if our moral Philosopher means any thing at all, his meaning certainly is, that St. Matthew having a design, in the course of his history, to represent the chief Priests and Pharisees addressing themselves to Pilate, as if they had heard from Jesus himself, that *after three days* he would rise again ; upon which they might procure an order to have the sepulchre secured ; for rendering this story more consistent and probable, he judged it necessary to explain the sign of the prophet *Jonah* in such a manner, as it might appear a prophesy delivered by Jesus before the chief Priests and Pharisees, determining the time of his resurrection. And if this was the design of this Evangelist, had he not the common sense to understand, what sort of declaration would answer his purpose, or prove a plain and clear intimation to the Rulers of the Jews ? While therefore the Gentleman takes upon him to set things in this light, he shews the world how very foolish and absurd it is to pretend, that this sign of the Prophet *Jonah* was ambiguous, or a mystery, a prophetic riddle to the chief Priests and Pharisees. The frequent mention of this sign in the Gospel-history, is a proof that it must have been well understood among the people. And surely the Pharisees were not quite so dull in apprehending the parables and figurative sayings of Jesus, as our Philosopher seems to imagine (*i*).

But, the Gospel-history affords us some further evidence, that the Rulers of the Jews had the resurrection

(*b*) P. 19.

(*i*) Luk. xx. 19.

rection of *Jesus* foretold to them. Our moral Philosopher, to prevent his being suspected of unfair dealing, is pleased to declare himself thus : “ As I have not,” says he, “ mentioned what St. John says of *Christ’s* foretelling his resurrection, lest it should be thought I stifle his evidence, I have examined him, and find that he says not a word of it, but denies it all.” A shameless assertion, and strangely expressed ! I likewise have examined this Historian, and from his account of things, it appears to me as certain, as any historical fact whatsoever, that *Jesus* did openly foretel his resurrection to the Pharisees and whole body of the *Jews*. Thus our Saviour representing the *Jews* and their Teachers under the familiar metaphor of sheep and a shepherd, he professes himself the only true and faithful Teacher, or the good shepherd to whom the sheep belong, and who lays down his life for them. *I*, says our Lord, *am the good shepherd ; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.* — *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.* *No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.* *I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.* *This commandment have I received of my Father (k).* Here, I say, I cannot but think, that the blessed *Jesus*, in the hearing of the Pharisees, publicly foretels his resurrection in the most express and positive manner, in such manner as gives them to understand, that unless he should raise his body from the grave, and return to life again, he would be found disobedient to the commands of his Father. Add, *I lay down my life, that I may take it again.* *This commandment I have received of my Father.* For what good reason our Philosopher, our moral Philosopher,

(k) Joh. x. 11, 17, 18.

sopher, was pleased to assure his Reader, that St. John says not a word of Christ's foretelling his resurrection, but denies it all, he is himself best able to inform the world. I shall only observe, that this public declaration of our Saviour, so little suits the common language of mankind, and contains in it something so very extraordinary and surprizing, so much beyond possibility in the common course of things, that it occasioned a mighty division among the Jews, as to the character of Jesus. Many of them said, *He hath a devil, and is mad; why bear ye him?* Others again said, *These are not the words of him that hath a devil, and is mad.* And, to justify their opinion, they appeal to a miracle he had lately done upon a man blind from his birth. *Can a devil, say they, or a man that hath a devil, and is mad, open the eyes of the blind?* Thus it is apparent, that the prediction concerning the resurrection of Jesus was made public to the world, well known to the Pharisees, and no secret in Jerusalem. Indeed, the particular time when Jesus should rise from the dead is not here mentioned or determined. But, when we recollect the sign of Jonas the Prophet, and that therein our Lord expressly declared to the Scribes and Pharisees, that *The Son of Man was to be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth;* they could be at no loss as to this article. And, upon the whole, the Reader will judge, whether our Philosopher's charge of forgery against Matthew, is well founded, or absolutely false and calumnious.

I know not whether our Philosopher's inward sense of truth, may not sometimes get the better of his prejudices; but he seems to allow, that the Pharisees were foretold of the resurrection of Christ. "The Rulers," says he, "could not certainly know by this sign of the Prophet Jonah, that
"Jesus

" Jesus was to die and rise again, and be so much
" alarmed about it as to watch and seal the sepul-
" chre, who believed his miracles no more than his
" Messiah-ship, and consequently gave no credit to
" his prediction (*l.*)."
Here, I say, our Philosopher seems to acknowledge, the Pharisees had a prediction given them, concerning the resurrection of Jesus; only, in his opinion, they could give no credit to it, because they believed his miracles no more than his Messiah-ship. But from whence comes this Gentleman to know, that the Rulers of the Jews did not believe Jesus to be the *Messiah*? Does this article of his knowledge arise from any other evidence than that of the Gospel-history? And does not the same history as expressly testify, that the miracles of Jesus were so incontestable, so convincingly manifest to all the senses of mankind, that those Rulers, not being able to deny them, were forced to avoid their influence, by ascribing them to the efficiency of *Beelzebub*? So sensible were the Pharisees of the truth of the miracles of Jesus, that, though we find them, from some circumstances attending those miracles, greatly divided in their conclusions, concerning the character of Jesus, whether he were of God; yet no where do we find them differing in their opinions, as to the reality of the miracles themselves. Nay, so far were the Pharisees from objecting to the miracles themselves, as if they had been only meer deceit and imposture, that they watched Jesus when he should work them on the Sabbath day, that from this circumstance they might have matter of accusation against him. It was this circumstance, and not any suspicion of imposture, that inflamed their indignation; *There are six days, say they to the people, in which men ought to work;*

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in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day (*m*). In short, so deeply were the Pharisees sometimes struck and alarmed by the miracles of Jesus, those standing proofs of his power and goodness, that, not able to restrain their angry and revengeful passions, they came to be filled with madness (*n*). How then comes our Philosopher to tell the world, “The Rulers of the Jews believed the ‘miracles of Jesus no more than his Messiah-ship?’” His philosophy is of a very particular complexion, that enables him so openly to contradict matters of fact, supported by the fullest, the clearest, and strongest evidence. They did not indeed believe Jesus to be the *Messiah*; this is matter of reasoning: But they had it not in their power to disbelieve his miracles; this is matter of sensible perception. And it was his working them on the Sabbath-day, upon which they pretended to conclude, *He could not be of God.*

’Tis true, our Philosopher would have it, that “their demanding a sign from heaven, intimates, “that they were not satisfied, that he had done any “miracle, nor,” says he, “does Jesus’s answer refer them to any.” This demand indeed intimates, that they were not satisfied with those beneficent miracles that were done upon the bodies of men; those, as I have said, they attributed to the power of the devil. They wanted other sort of miracles, a miracle from heaven, perhaps such a one as might represent in the clouds, the Son of Man, or their *Messiah*, pompously attended with all his hosts, taking vengeance on the nations, and gloriously triumphing over them. Such a miracle might have hit the taste, and answered the expectations of that *evil and adulterous generation*. But that generation having

been so obstinately wicked as to reject the authority of those many beneficent miracles, that were fully sufficient to convince the reason of mankind, they had no right to demand any farther or other miracle; nor could such a miracle as they wanted, suit the times, or serve to promote the present designs of Providence. *O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky;* but, says our Lord, referring them to those miracles he had wrought among them, and which only suit the kingdom of the *Messiah*; *can ye not discern the signs of the times?* One would think, that so far, in common sense, is this demand from intimating, that the Pharisees were not satisfied, that *Jesus* had done any miracle, that it rather intimates quite the contrary. It is, as if they had said, we have seen a great many of your miracles here on earth: But what are these! mean and inconsiderable, within the reach of *Baalzebul*, not proportioned to the glory of the *Messiah*: Let us have a proof of your power on high, a miracle from heaven. Thus they spoke in the wantonness of their heart, tempting our Saviour. They question not the truth of his miracles; they only want miracles of another nature. Their opinion therefore, as to the truth and reality of the miracles done by *Jesus*, could never prevent their giving credit to his prediction, in the sign of the Prophet *Jonah*, concerning his resurrection. So that we may well rest assured, that as the Evangelist *Matthew* represents them, *The chief Priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again.*

Our Philosopher concludes this article with two remarks; the first relates to the time of the continuance of the body of *Jesus* in the grave, or the state of death. And this, he tells us, does not answer the prediction,

prediction concerning the Son of man, that he should be *three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*. “For Jesus,” says he, “lay but the time of one day and an half, that is, two nights and a day, if he did that, for ‘tis not known when the body was gone; only it could not be found at the end of the second night. So that he lay but half the time of three days and three nights at most (o).” Tis needless to complain of this set of moral Philosophers their still repeating objections, without daring once to touch those answers that have been so frequently made to them. I shall only here briefly explain these two different forms of speech, *after three days*, and *three days and three nights*, which give occasion to people’s cavils.

We are told by *Mark*, that Jesus taught his disciples, that *after three days* he would rise again (p). Now, the time here signified by the phrase, *after three days*, when the resurrection should happen, is, by the other Historians, *Matthew* and *Luke*, reported to be *the third day*; each of them expressly declaring, that Jesus said to his disciples, he was to be raised again *the third day*. And *Mark* himself, in all other instances wherein he mentions the time of the resurrection, gives it out, as well as the other Historians, to be *on the third day*. So that a man of candour, when he compares things together, cannot but rest satisfied that this phrase, *after three days*, as it stands in *Mark*, can signify no other time but *the third day*. And certain it is, that in the language of the Jews, when they represent an event happening after so many days, &c. they plainly mean its happening on the last of those days, &c. Thus *Rehoboam* laid unto the people, *Come again unto me after three days*, meaning, as the people understood him, *on the third day*.

(o) P. 19.

(p) *Mark viii. 31.*

day. For, so Jeroboam and all the people came to Reboam on the third day, as the King bade them, saying, come again to me on the third day (q). And we know that the Rulers of the Jews understood this form of speech no otherwise; for, in their address to Pilate, having told him, that Jesus had said, *after three days I will rise again*, they beg he would command the sepulchre to be made sure (not beyond, but) until the third day. These phrases therefore, *after three days*, and *the third day*, are frequently of the same import, or have the same signification.

Again, our Saviour tells the Jews, that the Son of man shall be *three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*. And as this phrase, *three days and three nights*, here limits the time during which Jesus was to remain among the dead, what is the propriety in the Jewish language, or the principle of common sense, that can hinder us from understanding it in a consistency with those other phrases, which expressly declare, that *Jesus was to rise again the third day*? Such a form of speech may prove very stumbling to our Philosopher; but it was quite easy and obvious to the Jews. Thus the Egyptian, mentioned above, who is said to have fasted *three days and three nights*, did eat bread and drink water *on the third day*. And when our Saviour expresses himself after the same manner, telling the Jews, that he was to be *three days and three nights* in the state of the dead, may he not be allowed to mean, and may not the Jews be allowed so to understand him, that he was to rise again *the third day*? 'Tis altogether unfair in our Philosopher, to deny the Jews the privilege of speaking, and the sense of understanding their own language.

But,

(q) 2 Chron. x. 5, 12.

But, to reduce this form of speech, *three days and three nights*, into a phrase more familiar to us, let it be observed, that, in the language of the Jews, *a night and a day* (*νυχτίηπορ*) signifies no more than when they say barely, *a day*: For that these different forms of speech are used promiscuously, and what space of time they express by so many *days and nights*, the very same space do they express by an equal number of *days*. Thus we are told, that *the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights*; and, denoting the same space of time, it is likewise said concerning the same event, *and the flood was forty days upon the earth* (r). The meaning therefore of this prediction, *the Son of man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*, is plainly this, “*the Son of man shall be three days in the state of the dead*.” And in the room of *three days and three nights*, I chuse to substitute *three days*, a phrase of the same import; because it is more familiar to our ears, and may therefore prevent all confusion in our ideas. Nor needs our Philosopher scruple to admit of it, as it can by no means infringe the strength of his objection. Let it then be understood, that Jesus tells the Jews, as we would express it in our language, that he was to be *three days* in the state of the dead: And the objection is this,

“ The event, as it is explained by the Gospel-Historians themselves, does not answer the prediction: For Jesus having expired upon the cross about three afternoon on Friday, and returned to life again, as it is reported, on Sunday morning, towards the dawning of the day; it is false, in fact, that he remained *three days* among the dead.” This is the objection.

And,

(r) Gen. vii. 12, 17.

And, if our Philosopher here means, that *Jesus* did not continue in the state of the dead for the space of *three full natural days*, he is absolutely right. But I hope he will acknowledge, what the history puts beyond question, that he remained in that state “one whole day, and part of two other “days.” Indeed, it would be idle to go about to determine, what proportion the time that *Jesus* remained among the dead bears to the space of three full natural days; but let it be two thirds, or, as the Gentleman would have it, one half of that space: This notwithstanding, in common language, it is true, that *Jesus* was three days in the state of the dead. We learn from *Suetonius*, that *Piso*, before his murder, had lived six days in the character of *Cæsar*; and *Piso* himself, in his speech to the soldiers, as *Tacitus* reports it, mentions the same space of time: “It is now,” says he, “six “days, or, this is the sixth day, since I was a-“dopted *Cæsar* (s).” And, upon the authority of the same *Tacitus*, who tells us, that “*Piso* lived “but four days in that character (t);” would it not be ridiculous to object against the truth of this point of history, and to maintain, that *Piso* bore the character of *Cæsar* only two thirds of the time alledged; “And,” in our Philosopher’s learned reflections, “according to common computa-“tion, and common sense, six days can never be “four days; nor can any man make them so, tho’ “he preach six days about it.” The matter is, if we include the day of his adoption and the day of his murder, *Piso* lived six days in the state of a Prince. This, I say, is common computation and common sense. And, after the same manner, in-
cluding

(s) Suet. in Galb. cap. 17. Tacit. hist. lib. 1, cap. 29.

(t) Id. ibid. cap. 48. Vid. cap. 19.

cluding the day of his crucifixion and the day of his resurrection, Jesus was *three days* in the state of the dead. And what is more common among mankind, than in their account of the continuance or duration of any event, to include the first and last days, the day in which it begins and the day in which it ends? Thus the *Israelites* and *Syrians* pitched one over against the other seven days; and yet in the seventh day the battle was joined (*u*). Thus likewise in the case of *Cornelius*, *Four days ago*, says *Cornelius* to *Peter*, *I was fasting until this hour*; and yet it is apparent, that the day of his fast, and the day when he spoke thus to *Peter* (very probably before noon) must be included, in order to make up those *four days ago* (*x*). Nay, the Gentleman himself seems to have stumbled into this way of computing days; for in his blundering account of the appearance of *Jesus* to the two Disciples going to *Emmaus*; “ ‘Tis improbable (says he) that *Simon Peter*, who had, no longer than *three days* before, eat, drank, and prayed with him, and fought for him, should now walk with him a considerable way, and hear him discourse a considerable time, and not know him (*y*).” So that our Philosopher’s objection, upon this article, has no countenance from common language, common computation, or common sense; which all justify one’s saying, *Jesus was three days in the state of the dead*.

Our Philosopher’s other remark is this: “ If no sign was to be given to that evil and adulterous generation, but the sign of *Jonas* the Prophet, the only proof of *Jesus* being the *Messiah*, depended upon that sign being given, or that prophesy be-

(*u*) 1 Kings xx. 29.

(*x*) Acts x.

(*y*) P. 43.

"ing fulfilled, to the satisfaction of that evil and
"adulterous generation.—But, as Jesus did not
"appear after his resurrection to them (but to his
"disciples only) that prophesy was not fulfilled in
"fact (z).” Here the Gentleman seems to think,
that Jesus had promised to appear, after his resur-
rection, to that generation; but no such promise is
any where made. And for what good reason our
Saviour did not appear to all people, but to his Dis-
ciples only, I shall have occasion afterwards to ex-
plain. At present, I shall only observe, that our
Philosopher thinks quite out of character, or has no
understanding of the nature of things, when he af-
firms, that this *sign* of Jonas the Prophet, as it here
signifies the *death and resurrection of Christ*, was not
given to that evil and adulterous generation. Ac-
cording to my philosophy, I am led to think, that
this sign was given, not only to that generation,
but to all generations after. The sign foretold, is
the continuance of Jesus three days among the dead, and his rising again the third day. These are matters of
fact, and if there was then sufficient evidence (as in
the course of this argument I shall shew there was)
for the truth and certainty of these facts, the sign
was undoubtedly given to that generation; and while
that evidence is preserved or continues, the
sign is still set forth to the observation of mankind
in all succeeding ages and generations. So that this
prediction, for ought our Philosopher has yet said,
was certainly fulfilled; and there is nothing here
that can lessen the credit of the Gospel-history. At
the same time, the Gentleman may remember, that
that sort of miracles which the Jews wanted, *signs from heaven*, attended the fulfilling of this predicti-
on, whereby even their unreasonable demand was
so

so far answered: *There was darkness over all the earth: The veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom: The earth did quake: The rocks rent: The graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept, arose, and came out of their graves, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*

Thus far I have justified the Evangelist *Matthew*, in his representing the chief Priests and Pharisees as apprised of the resurrection of *Jesus*. I shall now consider, what the Gentleman alledges with respect to the prediction of the resurrection, said to be made to the Disciples.

And here, says he, "According to three Evangelists, I find, that *Jesus* had foretold his death and resurrection, no less than five times to his Disciples only (a)." Very well, may not the testimony of three Evangelists be allowed sufficient evidence as to the truth of this article? No; "There is reason to suspect," says our Philosopher, "all the predictions of the resurrection, inserted in St. *Matthew*, St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke*, to be forgery (b)." And what is this mighty reason? Why, *Jesus* is said to have foretold his death and resurrection to the Twelve, as plainly as words could express it; and yet, by their own confession, *they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.* An honest declaration, one should think, and a strong presumption of their sincerity, as meaning only to tell naked truth. "But (says the Gentleman) I am jealous of some fraudulent design, by this unaccountable confession. Sure, this is as surprising as any thing in the Gospels, that twelve men together should not understand such plain expressions! For their understanding, or this passage is to

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" be

(a) P. 20.

(b) P. 24.

“ be questioned (c).” With all my heart; let their understanding be questioned. But did they not understand what was meant, by *a man’s being mocked, and spitefully intreated, and spitted on; his being scourged; and put to death; and the third day rising again?* Yes, surely, they understood the meaning of these plain expressions, and understanding them in their plain, common meaning, *Peter*, when he first heard them, *took his Master, and began to rebuke him, saying, Lord, this shall not be unto thee.* Upon which, our Saviour gave *Peter* so severe a check, that at any time after, when the same prediction was repeated, the Disciples were afraid to ask him about it. But, if it be thus certain, that the Disciples understood the meaning of this prediction; why is it still said, *they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things that were spoken?* Now, may not our Philosopher, for the sake of his neighbour’s character, condescend to take this passage by its best handle, or to put the most favourable construction upon it, so as to make things, if possible, to consist and agree together? God forbid I should desire the Gentleman to forego his character, to forsake, on any consideration whatsoever, the nature and relations of things, or in any instance to go cross to their information. No, I am willing to go along with him in a religious regard to their principles: And, in this course, I am in hopes we shall be able to discern, in what particular sense the Disciples are said not to have understood this prediction of their Master.

Here then let us recollect, that as the Apostles had come to rest confident, that *Jesus* was their *Messiah*; so they went upon a persuasion, firmly rooted in their minds, that here on earth no opposition should stand

stand before their *Messiah*, that he would appear a glorious triumphant conqueror, and abide for ever, not subject to death, an universal Monarch, having the Gentiles under his dominion, reigning always invincible in great power and majesty. And, no doubt, they expected, what appears to a Philosopher extremely natural, but provides the Gentleman a subject of ridicule (*d*), that in this kingdom of the *Messiah*, they should be no inconsiderable personages. Such, I say, was the nature and relations of things, as the Apostles apprehended them in the character of *Jesus* their *Messiah*. Now, when they are told, that this very person shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully intreated, and spitted on, that they shall scourge him, and put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again ; can any man think it possible for them to comprehend, how such violent contradictions can ever have an existence in the character of their *Messiah*? Before they could conceive the possibility of such events, they must either renounce the character, which they and the whole nation had formed of their *Messiah*; or they must deny *Jesus* to be that person. But, as neither of these was capable of entering into the thoughts of the Apostles, and they were resolute in adhering to the national opinion about the *Messiah*, and to *Jesus* as that person ; this, beyond question, put it out of their power to suspect, that ever such predictions should be seen accomplished in the case of their Master. And does not this clearly shew us, in what particular sense, or how truly and justly it is said, that *they understood none* of these plain expressions, wherein *Jesus* foretold to them his death and resurrection ? It was therefore the nature and relations of things, as they apprehended them, in the character

(d) P. 35.

ster of their *Messiah*, or, in common language, it was their prejudices that occasioned their understanding none of these things, that bid this saying from them, *the third day I will rise again*; so that they knew not the things that were spoken; they were not able to reconcile such predictions to the character of their *Messiah*, but esteemed them quite contradictory. No wonder then, when they heard Jesus repeating these predictions, and still insisting upon his being involved in such melancholy events, that the Apostles came to be exceeding sorry. Nor can the nature of things highly commend the justness and delicacy of our Philosopher's wit, while he ridicules the Apostles in this situation. " 'Tis," says he, "equally strange, that they should be sorry for what they did not understand; as that they should not understand what they were sorry for; except they were sorry they did not understand it (e)." *Quid rides?* — 'Tis equally strange, that the Gentleman should laugh at what he does not understand; as that he should not understand what he laughs at, except he is laughing he does not understand it.

But, our Philosopher goes farther, and would persuade us, from the Evangelists *Luke* and *John*, that this article of our Saviour's foretelling his death and resurrection, is nothing but meer forgery. And, for this purpose, he informs us, that in their account of this prediction, as it was made to the Disciples, by the Gentleman's calculation, for the third time; while *Matthew* and *Mark* distinctly report, that Jesus foretold, not only that he should be delivered into the hands of men, but that he should be killed, and the third day rise again; we learn no more from *Luke*, than that Jesus said, *the Son of man shall be*

(e) P. 22.

be delivered into the bands of men, without hinting at his death and resurrection. "Now," says our Philosopher, "if Jesus then foretold it, as St. Matthew and St. Mark say, I wonder St. Luke did not mention it." This (continues he) "like a ray of light, discovers that some enemy to truth, in the night, has sown tares among the wheat (f):" Meaning, that by *Luke's* relating no more, the whole forgery becomes apparent. But, granting that what St. *Luke* here reports was said at the precise time, to which *Matthew* and *Mark* have affixed their account of things, which no man who attends to the history, can well imagine; by what rule or maxim in philosophy does the Gentleman pretend to teach us, that by St. *Luke's* telling us only a part of the prediction (which, a little before, he had mentioned in all its parts) we must conclude, that what more is reported by the Evangelists *Matthew* and *Mark*, is forgery? I violently suspect, that, notwithstanding our Philosopher's great zeal for truth, which inspired him to engage in this argument, this his use of philosophy must be held a daring prostitution of the heavenly gift, naturally the powerful guardian of truth, but here enforced to serve a man's prejudices, and to do the dirty work of the poorest sophistry. Of so extraordinary a nature is this Gentleman's way of reasoning, that it puts it in a man's power, in most instances, when two or more Historians take notice of the same event, to prove a forgery upon which of them soever he pleases, either upon the one or the other, as his design may determine him. Here we must think, *Luke* is a faithful Historian, worthy of credit; and *Matthew* and *Mark* are void of veracity, not to be trusted; because, forsooth, it answers the Gentleman's purpose:

But,

(f) P. 22.

But, had his design so directed him, his Logic, with the same ease, would have proved quite the contrary. Possibly, our Philosopher may claim some exemptions and privileges peculiar to himself; but should any other man employ his philosophy at this rate, the World, I am afraid, must judge him a contemptible babler, unworthy the name of a Philosopher, and deserving to be hissed out of the Republic of Letters.

But, the Gentleman's evidence, which he pretends to fetch from the Evangelist *John*, rises higher. "As I have not," says he, "mentioned what St. *John* says of *Christ*'s foretelling his resurrection to his Disciples; lest it should be thought I stifle his evidence, I have examined him, and find, that he says not a word of it, but denies it all." As I have already considered this bold, shameless assertion, and from *John*'s account of things made it appear, that, in the presence of his Disciples, *Jesus* foretold his resurrection to the *Jews*; I shall here further explain, that this Evangelist has likewise informed the world, that the same events were foretold to the Disciples alone. I know not what might be the effect of our Philosopher's re-examining this history; but every man of common eyes and common understanding, who reads from ver. 31. of chap. xiii. to chap. xvii. must soon be sensible, that these predictions are frequently repeated, urged, and pressed upon the Apostles. Now, says our Lord to his Disciples, *is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. Little Children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and, as I said unto the Jews, whither I go ye cannot come, so now I say unto you.* This, it would seem, struck the Disciples

Disciples with some prospect of great danger, so that being greatly alarmed, *Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou ? Jesus answered him, whither I go, thou canst not follow me now ; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.* Peter said unto him, *Lord, why cannot I follow thee now ? I will lay down my life for thy sake.* But such was the danger just now approaching, and wherein they were immediately to be involved, that Jesus gives Peter to understand, that *the cock should not crow, till he had denied him thrice* ; so far would he be from having the fortitude, on this occasion, to lay down his life for his sake. Thus the Apostles, still alarmed with impending dangers, are greatly troubled, and sorrow filleth their hearts. Upon which, our Saviour goes on to comfort them, telling them, that he was indeed to leave the world, but it was in order to go to the Father, and he would come again unto them. Nor should it be long betwixt his leaving them, and their seeing him again. *A little while, says our Lord, and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.* But the Apostles not knowing what to make of all this, our Saviour employs a strong image, to represent to them the inevitableness of their sorrow, and its short continuance ; and, at the same time, the certainty of their joy, and how secure they should be in its possession ; both which should arise from what was immediately to befall him. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye shall weep and lament, but the World shall rejoice ; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail bath sorrow, because her hour is come ; but, as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow ; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice,*

joice, and your joy no man taketh from you. A case, in its causes and effects, with vast propriety represented by the above image. But neither yet do the Apostles herein understand the meaning of our Saviour. So that, he tells them plainly, *I came, says our Lord, forth from the Father; and am come into the world: Again I leave the world, and go to the Father.* This, at length, the Apostles seem to imagine they had some notion of. But our Saviour still lets them know, that dangers are at hand, that they should all forsake him, and leave him alone in the hands of his enemies. *Bebold, says our Lord, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. And these things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world, ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.* Thus our Saviour forewarns his Disciples of impending dangers, and comforts them in the prospect of speedy and certain deliverance, of succeeding joys, which no man taketh from them. He tells them, that he is to go away, and to leave the world;—that he is to come again, and they shall see him;—that he is to go to the Father, in whose house are many mansions, where he is to prepare a place for them. And this, says our Lord to his Disciples, *I have told you, before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe.*

Now, in all this, is there not a word concerning the death and resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, nothing that intimates such events to his Apostles! It is unimaginable to me, in what particular sense the Gentleman's philosophy directs him to understand these passages. Does not *Christ's* leaving the world signify his death? Does not his coming again, when his Disciples

Disciples shall see him, signify his resurrection ? And, does not his going to the Father signify his ascension ? It seems a problem, only to be solved by our Philosopher, whether he has ever read this history. But I must esteem it still more surprising, that he takes upon him to assure us, that this Evangelist denies it all, all that the other Evangelists have reported concerning the predictions of the death and resurrection of Jesus ! What is the complexion of the Gentleman's philosophy one may think pretty apparent ; and indeed it seems to intitle him to entertain the world with very bold assertions, that openly insult, and would intral the common sense of mankind.

But our Philosopher's evidence from the Evangelist John, for proving the predictions of the resurrection to be forgery, is not yet ended. He goes on, and would have us believe, that this Evangelist speaks out the truth, and has betrayed the cheat. " St. John, says he, tells the most probable truth, " that the Disciples knew not any prophesy, that " Christ was to rise again. What else do these " words mean ; they knew not the Scriptures, that he " must rise again from the dead (b) ? If St. John " means the Scriptures of the Prophets, how should " they ? for none such are to be found (i) " But does the Gentleman here design his Reader should understand, that St. John means to inform the world, that, as the Disciples knew not any prophesy, that Christ was to rise again ; so neither is there any such prophesy contained in the Old Testament ? So far as I am able to understand common language, it appears to me, that this Evangelist plainly intends the clean contrary. He tells us, that Mary Magdalene, who

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was

(b) John xx. 9.

(i) P. 23.

was early at the sepulchre, having given them notice, that *they had taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre*, both he and *Simon Peter* ran immediately to the sepulchre ; and that, missing the body, he himself believed, as the women had said, that they had taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre ; for as yet *they knew not the Scriptures, that he must rise again from the dead*. And is not this plainly telling the world, that though in the *Scriptures* it is foretold, that *Christ* must rise again from the dead ; yet at that time, to which the Evangelist refers, they knew not so much ? Nothing more obvious. Nor has the Gentleman reason to alledge, that in the Old Testament there is no prophesy to be found relating to the resurrection of *Jesus*. He may for himself explain such passages, as his own notions of things will permit him. In fact, it is certain, that the Apostles insist upon such prophesies and from thence go about to prove the necessity of *Christ's* rising again from the dead. No truth therefore is here spoken out by the Evangelist *John*, that discloses a cheat, or that fastens a forgery upon the other Evangelists. The direct contrary is plainly intimated. It is indeed apparent, that notwithstanding those prophesies, and the express declaration of *Jesus* himself, that he was to suffer death, and to rise again, the Disciples neither foreknew, nor expected the resurrection of their Master : But this, as I have already explained, necessarily arose from their prejudices, or from the nature and relations of things, as they apprehended them in the character of their *Messiah*. So that our Philosopher's premises are very good, nothing can be truer ; *the Disciples neither foreknew, nor expected the resurrection* : But his conclusion is wretchedly bad, nothing can be falser ; therefore,

therefore, “ there was no prophesy concerning this event, nor did *Jesus* himself foretel it.”

I have here only further to observe; I am sorry our Philosopher gives himself leave to act so much out of character, as to overlook all the beauties in the conduct of other people, and to be only concerned to find out blemishes, or to be pointing them out where they are not to be found. In several instances, our Saviour, when he foretold his death and resurrection, chose to do it to his twelve Disciples only. Now, from this circumstance, the Gentleman is pleased to insinuate, there is reason to suspect, that the whole of this prediction was the contrivance of the Apostles, and that they gave it out to have been made to themselves only, that they might prevent a detection from other people. Men’s prejudices make them capable of conceiving things in a strange light. But ’tis great pity that a *moral Philosopher* should be so far carried away, as to put the worst constructions upon the best actions. In two instances particularly, our Saviour is very pointed, in explaining to his Apostles the circumstances of his death. *Behold, says our Lord, we go up to Jerusalem ; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief Priests, and unto the Scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles : And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him (k).* That there was good reason for the blessed *Jesus* his being so particular to his Apostles, every considerate man will confess. But, as it sometimes happened, that our Saviour came to be vastly popular, so extremely high in the affections of the people, that they would have run all hazards to preserve him ; had he public-

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(k) *Mark x. 32, 33.*

ly expressed himself in so particular a manner, and openly told the *Jews*, that the chief Priests and Scribes had formed a design to murder him, or to deliver him up to the *Gentiles* to be crucified; would not this have exposed those Gentlemen to the fury of an enraged multitude, who, in a fit of their passion for *Jesus*, might have been hurried on to take vengeance of those his mortal enemies? How, in the nature and relations of things, such an event could have been prevented, is not very obvious. Was it not then wise and prudent, kind and beneficent, a most peaceful and generous disposition in *Jesus*, that he was thus particular to his Apostles only, and said no more in public to the bulk of his Disciples, or to the *Jews*, but in general that he was to be delivered into the hands of men, and to be slain? Nay, even thus much he frequently represents in figurative expressions; and so delicate is he upon this matter, that he forms, as it were, an excuse for his murderers; *No man*, says he, *taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself*; *I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again*. I confess, in some of his parables, *Jesus* sets forth the chief Priests and Scribes, as they understood it themselves, as the persons who should put him to death: But, I say, as one may learn from two of those predictions, *viz.* the 1st and 4th, transcribed by the Gentleman, it is only to his Apostles that in express terms he mentions the particular persons; in all other instances, whether to his other Disciples or to the *Jews*, as appears, not only from the other predictions in the Gentleman's collection, but from several other passages, he foretels the event in general terms, in parables, or in figurative expressions, and this I cannot but apprehend, must be counted a great beauty in the conduct of our blessed Saviour.

Thus

Thus it appears (in contradiction to our Philosopher (i.),) “ There is no reason to suspect all or any of the predictions, concerning the resurrection of Jesus, inserted in St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, to be forgery.”

So that I now come along with the Gentleman, to consider the second period of time, which reaches from the death of Christ to his resurrection : Upon which our Philosopher pretends to show, that the sepulchre was neither sealed nor guarded ; and that in the case of the soldiers there could be no bribe.

Upon the former article I have made it evident, that Jesus did certainly foretel his death and resurrection to the chief Priests and Pharisees, and with more particular circumstances to his twelve Apostles. What evidence, therefore, against the sealing and guarding of the sepulchre, our Philosopher pretends to bring from the case of such predictions having never been made, cannot be admitted. So that there can be here no ground for this sort of reasoning : “ The prophesy of Jesus concerning his rising again, was so far from being publicly known to all Jerusalem, that the Disciples did not know it. For all the Evangelists shew, that a resurrection was what they did not expect. Then how should any body else know it ? And if such prophesy was not known, how should the sepulchre be sealed and watched (m) ? ” I say, as there is upon this article no foundation for any such reasoning, I shall here consider what our Philosopher proposes from other topics.

“ And (says the Gentleman) if we take the opinion of the chief Priests and Pharisees from their own words, as delivered by St. Matthew, they believed

" believed *Jesus* was a deceiver ; and appear afraid
 " not of his rising in the day, but of the Disciples
 " stealing him away in the night (n). " But that
 the chief Priests and Pharisees had no apprehension
 of this nature, and cannot therefore be understood
 to have sealed and guarded the sepulchre, our Philo-
 losopher labours to prove from the situation of the
 Apostles, their having no expectation of the resur-
 rection of *Jesus* ; and no design of stealing away his
 dead body, as the Gentleman's bold unfortunate
 friend, Mr. *Woolston*, took upon him to alledge.

That the Apostles had no prospect of the resur-
 rection of *Jesus*, but upon his crucifixion, gave up all
 for lost, without having any design upon the dead
 body, is a most certain truth. But how should the
 chief Priests and Pharisees have come to know thus
 much concerning the inward sentiments of the A-
 postles? " Why, (says the Gentleman) suppose now
 " the Priests and Pharisees went the next day to
 " set the watch, as St. *Mattew* reports, did they
 " not look into the sepulchre to see if the body was
 " there? And if they saw the body, they must
 " needs see how it was spiced, and preserved for
 " keeping, if it was done ; they could not see one
 " without the other. And would they not then,
 " being witnesses of that, have taken the soldiers
 " back again with them, resting contented that the
 " Disciples knew nothing of any prophesy of his
 " rising again, and therefore could have no design,
 " under that pretence, to steal away the body, and
 " report he was risen (o). " Thus it was that the
 Rulers of the *Jews* entered into the thoughts and
 designs of the Apostles. And if Politicians are so
 soon satisfied as to people's designs, and are so easily
 put

(n) P. 29.

(o) P. 25.

put off with such appearances, where their own interests are concerned, it is as strange as any thing that has surprised our Philosopher. The chief Priests and Pharisees found the body buried after the common manner, *wound in linen cloaths with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury*; and does the Gentleman really think, that from hence they come to conclude, and to rest contented, the Apostles had no design of stealing away the dead body? Having been foretold of the resurrection of Jesus, they apprehended greater danger from the opinion prevailing, that he was risen, than from any thing that had yet happened; and, I incline to think, that Rulers and Ministers of State know mankind too well to venture their own and the nation's safety upon the certainty of such conclusions as this of our Philosopher's. In pushing on his reasoning, he proposes indeed this very wise question, when they found the body buried in common form; "Would they, says "he, expose themselves to ridicule by setting a "watch, and sealing the sepulchre (p)?" Why truly, in my apprehension, as the chief Priests and Pharisees had insinuated to Pilate, that *bis Disciples might come by night and steal him away*, and had no reason from what they saw at the sepulchre to abate their suspicion, had they not taken this precaution, they would have become the objects of the justest ridicule. It cannot therefore but be allowed, that the parts of this history, do as yet very well consist and agree together.

But our Philosopher will needs have the Apostles honest men in one article, "their having no design "to steal away the dead body;" that he may prove them villains in another article, "their re-
"porting

" porting the sealing and watching the sepulchre." Consider now their case: " Their Master was dead, " and they are to contrive to steal away his body : " For what ? Did they expect to make a King of " the dead body, if they could get it in their " power ? Or did they think, if they had it, they " could raise it to life again ? Or, if they trusted so " far to their Master's prediction as to expect his " resurrection, (which I think it is evident they did " not) could they think the resurrection depended " on their having the dead body ? It is in all views " absurd." Thus our Philosopher is pleased to adopt the Christian reasoning, whereby it is demonstrated, that the Disciples could not possibly be guilty of stealing away the dead body, and pretending Jesus was risen. And says the Gentleman, " Are " not these reasons as strong against the Priests and " Pharisees setting a watch to prevent the Disciples " stealing the body ; as it is, that the Disciples " should attempt it ? Could not those think and " reason thus as well as these ? Why then should " they take these unnecessary precautions ? Here " the absurdity of guarding against a fraudulent re- " surrection is well shewn (q)." But here our Philosopher has not well considered the nature of things. The force of this argument, on the side of Christianity, proving that the Apostles cannot be suspected of stealing away the body of Jesus, depends upon the situation of the Apostles in their notions of things, their views and interests, which, we certainly know, could in no sort be answered without having Jesus alive among them : And this certain knowledge we have from the Gospel-history, wherein they intermix their own with that of their Master.

But

(q) P. 29, 30.

But how was it possible for the Priests and Pharisees to know thus much concerning the Apostles? It is, I believe, one of the oddest questions ever urged by a Philosopher; " Could not the Priests and Pharisees think and reason what part the Apostles should act with respect to the body of *Jesus*, as well as the Apostles themselves could do?" If this strange question deserves any answer, I say, Yes, provided the Priests and Pharisees had been equally conscious of the views and sentiments of all that passed in the minds of the Apostles. But how they should have come by this consciousness, I know not: Perhaps our Philosopher may be able to inform us. The reasons, therefore, in the case of the Apostles, shewing them incapable of conceiving any design to steal away the body, being altogether unknown to the Rulers of the *Jews*, could have no influence over them to prevent their watching the sepulchre. Nay, had they sent abroad their spies and got intelligence, that there was no design among the Disciples to stea laway the dead body; yet, surely, having been forewarned that *Jesus* was to rise again, good policy or common prudence, would have obliged them, in a matter of such consequence, to have taken this easy precaution of watching the sepulchre. In short, the Christian argument which our Philosopher here insists upon, and which he confesses well shews the absurdity of a fraudulent resurrection, is this; " The Apostles, without the resurrection of *Jesus*, and their having him alive among them, had no measures to pursue, no interests to serve: And therefore, as they could not pretend to restore life to the dead body, they had no temptation, and could not be guilty of stealing it away." But the *Jewish* reasoning is this; " The Apostles, upon assuring the people that *Jesus*

“ *Jesus was risen, without shewing him alive, might carry on their former plot: And therefore, to prevent their being detected, might come by night and steal him away.*” Nor, in their sense and view of things, was it possible for them to reason otherwise. Having therefore no knowledge, or, if the Gentleman would rather like to have it thus expressed, having no absolute certainty, of the notions and sentiments and views of the Apostles, and that they could pretend to nothing without being able to shew *Jesus* alive; but suspecting that the Disciples might come by night and steal him away, and *say unto the people, he is risen from the dead, so the last error shall be worse than the first.* It was this suspicion, however groundless in itself, that made the chief Priests and Pharisees solicitous to have the sepulchre sealed and guarded.

But, in our Philosopher’s opinion, “ They had no reason to be under such consternation, and therefore there is no ground to believe they were.” People then never are afraid, or suspect any thing, without reason! “ Nay, continues he, it was so little to the purpose, to guard against either a real or fraudulent resurrection, that they could not possibly be guilty of so weak a conduct (*r*).” We were told a little before, that the sepulchre was not guarded, because the chief Priests and Pharisees would not thereby expose themselves to ridicule; and here it is said, they could not possibly be guilty of so weak a conduct. Does our Philosopher then imagine, that every thing weak and ridiculous in the conduct of mankind, related by Historians, is mere forgery? This, I confess, would mighty diminish the number of our historical truths. But might not the

(r) P. 31.

the Rulers of the Jews do a weak and ridiculous thing, as well as others of mankind have done both before and after them? And pray, what is the good reason upon which the Gentleman assures the world, that, to guard the sepulchre was so little to the purpose, and so weak a conduct, that the chief Priests and Pharisees could not possibly be guilty of it? Why, "the cause for watching the dead body was, "leit the Disciples steal him away by night, and say "unto the people, he is risen again from the dead. "And, says our Philosopher, what if they did, if "they had no proof for that assertion (f)." But if the Priests and Pharisees had no proof of the contrary, as they knew of the prediction, and had the body once in their possession, might not this render their cause a little suspicious? Can any man of common sense (as the Gentleman speaks) think it would have been little to the purpose, to have answered this assertion of the Apostles, by a public proclamation, assuring the world, that the body of that person pretended to be alive, was still lying in splices, as the Disciples had laid it, dead and lifeless in the sepulchre, where every body had access to see it, and which, for the general satisfaction, they would expose to the public view of all the inhabitants of Jerusalem? Would not this have confounded the whole plot, shown the Apostles abandoned impudent impostors, and made the conduct of the Priests and Pharisees in watching the sepulchre, to be universally applauded as wise and prudent? But the Gentleman goes on,

"If, says he, the people could never see Jesus afterwards, would they be such credulous fools to believe them? For such they must be to be
"lieve

" believe such a miracle on bare report, when the event thereof could prove itself." A wise question, and a judicious reflection from our Philosopher, and mighty consistent with his opinion of the Christian world! Does he not complain, that, in the days of the Apostles, and in all ages since, people have been such credulous fools, and are like to continue so to the end of time, if his argument, which in the vanity of his heart, he will needs have to be invincible truth, puts not an end to the strange delusion? But let us a little recollect our Philosopher's reasoning. Does he not here openly betray his own cause, and strongly argue for the truth of the resurrection? No doubt, he fairly insinuates, that, on bare report, the people could not have been such credulous fools to believe it: And, as in fact it is certain, that infinite numbers did undoubtedly believe it; must we not from hence necessarily conclude, that, as to the truth and certainty of this grand event, they were otherwise, than on bare report, fully satisfied? *Magna est veritas.* — Be that as it will; the Gentleman next proposes a very good reason, (which shews the absurdity of his opinion) why in prudence the chief Priests and Pharisees could not fail to watch the sepulchre.

" It looks," says he, " as if the opinion of the Scribes and Pharisees was, that the Disciples had been used to deceive the people by reporting false miracles, and that the people had been carried away by such false reports; Why else should they be afraid they should be so now?" But, to speak out the real truth, (as our Philosopher's argument would oblige him to go on) neither did the Apostles deceive the people, nor were the people led away by false reports. What reason is there then to believe, they sealed and watched the sepulchre? Surely, none,

none. Why should they fear? The Disciples were honest men, and no seducers of the people. Thus, when it may promote his own views, the Gentleman can venture to vindicate the Apostles from deceit and imposture. Whether it is requisite in defence of Infidelity, I shall not say; but so light and unsteady, so inconsistent and reproachful a conduct, the cause of Christianity does not require. Our way lies open before us, we can go on in an equal, uniform manner, and without stepping aside into any delusive course, can represent things as they really are. The Gentleman is pleased to tell us, that to this story of sealing and watching the sepulchre we can give no credit, because "It looks as if
" the opinion of the Scribes and Pharisees was, that
" the Disciples had been used to deceive the people
" by reporting false miracles, and that the people
" had been carried away by such false reports." And is not this the very case, as the sacred history relates it? They charged Jesus with casting out devils by *Beelzebub* the prince of the devils; they called him a deceiver; and thus they reprimand their own officers, *Are ye also deceived?* *Have any of the Rulers, or of the Pharisees believed on him?* But this people who knoweth not the law, are cursed (b). And can our Philosopher think, that the Rulers of the *Jews* had herein a better opinion of the Disciples than they had of their Master? By his own reasoning, therefore, the Priests and Pharisees must have been upon their guard, and set a watch on the sepulchre. And must they not have been the more strongly induced to take this precaution, as they well knew that one of their own party, a friend of Jesus, *Joseph of Arimathea*, a man of considerable note, had begged the body from *Pilate,*

(b) John vii. 47.

late, and laid it in his own tomb ; whereby, in their apprehension, the Disciples might have easy access to dispose of it, as their designs should direct them ? Besides, as it seems to have been a common opinion among the *Jews*, that Prophets and good men might return to life again (*i*), this certainly could not but increase their solicitude about having the sepulchre guarded, as in their suspicion, the Apostles might come to lay hold of this popular prejudice for promoting the belief of a resurrection ; the credit of which they might hope totally to ruin by having the body in their power. Thus, we still see, it stands to reason to believe, that the chief Priests and Pharisees, as St. *Matthew* reports, sealed and watched the sepulchre.

" But, why all this fear of the Disciples, who fled and hid themselves for fear of the *Jews*, out of a just apprehension, that they should, if apprehended, be sacrificed with their Master (*k*) ? " The Gentleman's philosophy has certainly in it something very peculiar, that can make a plain reason for watching the sepulchre, a good argument against it. Common sense seems to teach a man, that the Rulers of the *Jews* might indeed have come to judge it needless to take this precaution of watching the sepulchre, had they had all the Disciples of *Jesus* in sure custody. But, because they had all fled and hid themselves, and were thereby at full liberty, under the covert of night, to execute their designs ; therefore the chief Priests and Pharisees had no reason to fear, or to guard the sepulchre, lest his Disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, he is risen from the dead ; is a paradox to be explained by no other a method but the Gentleman's philosophy.

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(*i*) *Mark vi. 14. Luke ix. 7.*(*k*) *P. 32.*

The other branch of our Philosopher's evidence against sealing and watching the sepulchre, is the case of the women, who are said to have gone early to the sepulchre. "It appears," says he, "those women were under no apprehension of any hindrance or molestation from the watchmen. They consulted together as they went, who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? Which they would not have said, if they had known it was sealed; nor would they have gone to anoint the body, if they had known there had been a watch set (*l.*)?" All this, I confess, is justly observed, nor can we conceive it otherwise. "And (says the Gentleman) if these things had been done, how is it possible but they must have known them?" But how possible it is, they knew nothing of them, our Philosopher might have understood, had he attended to their history. It would seem, as if they were carrying the body of Jesus to be buried, the women followed after, and sitting over against the sepulchre, beheld where he was laid, and saw a great stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre. Thus, after all was over, without hearing the least whisper concerning any design to seal the stone and watch the sepulchre, they returned home, and prepared spices and ointments for the body. And the next day being the Sabbath, when they could not execute their pious intentions, *they rested all that day according to the commandment.* Now, it was on this day that the chief Priests and Pharisees addressed Pilate, and having obtained leave from him, *went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.* So that upon the face of the history it is apparent, that

(*l.*) P. 27.

that the women knew nothing of what was done on the Sabbath, by the chief Priests, at the sepulchre.

But, says the Gentleman, “ So public an action, “ done about him, on whom all their thoughts and “ affections were at that time employed, could not “ be private to them (*m*).” An idle speculation of a doting Philosopher ! What matter of fact, how consistent soever with all the other parts of the history, can, at this rate, escape being condemned as forgery ? To a Philosopher that understands the nature of things, I am apt to think, the clean contrary will appear highly probable. The body had been buried without any disturbance, it was laid in the sepulchre of a friend, where it was safe, and in no danger of meeting with any rudeness or indignity. The women therefore having no apprehension of any thing of this nature, they had no temptation to be looking abroad. And, as all their thoughts and affections, as the Gentleman observes, were, at that time, employed about *Jesus*, what else could they chuse to do, but to keep at home, retired from the view of all mankind, privately bewailing the death of their friend, lamenting their own mournful condition, imparting their sorrows to one another, and finding no comfort but in the prospect of discharging their last duty in anointing the dead body ? This, in my apprehension, a Philosopher cannot but esteem a natural account of their situation : And it shews them void of all correspondence with the world; and knowing nothing of what is passing in public ; nor am I able to conjecture, as it is consistent with every other article of the history, to what objection our Philosopher will judge it liable.

It

(m) P. 27.

It is true, the Gentleman still insists, that had the chief Priests and Pharisees sealed and watched the sepulchre, the women certainly must have known it : " Nothing (says he) could be hid from the Disciples, for St. Matthew knew what the chief Priests and Rulers said in their Privy Council." And is this the first thing said in a Privy Council, that ever came abroad in the world ? This, however, is one of those strange things that so frequently throw our Philosopher into fits of wonder. And, perhaps, had St. Matthew known the same moment or hour it happened, as the Gentleman would insinuate, that the chief Priests gave large money to the soldiers, &c. it might have seemed to some people somewhat wonderful. But, as from the holding of this Privy Council, and the writing of his history, which happened several years after, St. Matthew had full time to inform himself, and easy access to know the matter of fact ; may not our Philosopher's wonder be somewhat abated ? And pray, what connexion can any mortal discern betwixt St. Matthew's knowledge of things when he wrote his history, and the knowledge of the women, when the chief Priests set a watch on the sepulchre ? Were it not so common in the cause of infidelity, one might wonder how a man can come to prostitute his philosophy in maintaining such an article. To any man therefore who considers things, it is apparent, that, although the chief Priests did most certainly seal and guard the sepulchre, yet, the women, when they went to anoint the body of Jesus, knew nothing of the matter.

But, to shew what dependence there is on the truth of Gospel-history,— " St. Luke agrees with the other Evangelists Matthew and Mark, and informs us, that the women also which came with him

" him from Galilee followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how the body was laid. Therefore, they knew, to be sure, that Nicodemus had laid it in spices. And yet St. Luke fays, that these very women returned from the sepulchre, and prepared spices and ointments, and rested the Sabbath-day: And that on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices they had prepared." Now, says our Philosopher, " I cannot reconcile this with St. John's account; for, if the body was laid in the sepulchre with an hundred pound weight of spices what need had it of more, or to be done again (n)?" A rare question from a Philosopher who pretends to understand human nature! It may, perhaps, be doubted whether the women knew of what Nicodemus had done: But, as it matters not whether they did or no, I wish the Gentleman had told the world, upon what authority he would persuade us, that this piece of conduct in the women was altogether needless. He thinks himself that Nicodemus had done enough; but is he absolutely sure, that the women thought so too; or, does he pretend, that his opinion as to that matter, is the standard whereby the women must necessarily have adjusted their conduct? Nicodemus, in embalming the body, had only made use of a mixture of myrrh and aloes; but a great many other ingredients were employed upon such occasions; as in the case of Asa, they buried him in his own sepulchre, and laid him in the bed, which was filled with sweet odours, and divers kinds of spices prepared by the Apothecary's art; and they made a very great burning for him (o): And might not the women have apprehended, that some such burning, or some such other ingredients were still necessary?

Again,

(n) P. 26.

(o) 2 Chron. xvi, 14.

Again, *Nicodemus*, in what he had done, had indeed testified his high regard for *Jesus*; but what was that to the women? They had not as yet, in such instances, expressed their esteem and tender affections; and might they not incline to relieve, in some measure, the grief they were under, and to indulge themselves in the thoughts of their having something of their own about the body of their Lord, that should declare the sincere veneration they, in particular, had for him, and how greatly they loved and honoured him? To a Philosopher who understands the affections of human minds, nothing can appear more natural. And when their history informs us, that so they intended, what is there in the nature and relations of things that can prevent our believing it? To tell us *the body had no need of more, or to be done again*, is an objection that must expose a Philosopher to ridicule. And what I would gladly know, are the bounds which the Gentleman pretends to set to the expressions of one's regard and tender affections towards one's departed friends, beyond which, if an Historian shall report people go, we may rest confident he reports a falsehood? In a matter so much depending on the dispositions of particular persons, and where, both by God and man, people are allowed so much latitude; how the nature and relations of things can help our Philosopher to a general rule, I have not philosophy enough to determine. Upon settling these limits, I suppose the Gentleman will condemn as forgery what is related by the *Roman Historians*: That *Orbo's* soldiers, from a mighty love of their Prince, not only wept, and kissed his hands and feet, but killed themselves by his funeral pile. And, as it was very needless, it must be equally false, that *Severus*, so long after the death of *Pertinax*, celebrated his funerals,

nerals, where *Dio*, who was present, tells us, there were the most tender expressions of the deepest concern. Nor can it be true, that the two sons of *Severus*, after they had burned their father's body, and laid his ashes in sweet spices, having carried them to *Rome*, did there again solemnize his funeral rites ; for what need had the body of more, and to be done again ? And thus when our Philosopher, together with every thing ridiculous, and whatever may be counted weak in the conduct of mankind, has likewise struck out whatever may be deemed needless, we shall have left us, I am afraid, not a great deal of true history.

" But why do these Evangelists tell different stories ? St. *Mattibew*, one about guarding and sealing the sepulchre ; St. *Mark* and St. *Luke*, another, which shews it was neither guarded nor sealed ; St. *John* to the same purpose, but different from both ? Who can know the truth from these disagreeing Historians ? Why did not they that followed St. *Mattibew*, make his story good ? Why not so much as mention a word of it, but fly from that, and tell another which contradicted it ? Will not some imagine that St. *Mattibew*'s had been detected, therefore St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* tell another ; and that theirs having been also confuted, St. *John* comes, and tells one different from all the rest ? If they had not been routed out of their intrenchments, why did they quit them, and throw up others (p) ? " No man more resolute than our Philosopher, he asserts boldly, and keeps within no bounds in his calumny. The naked truth is this : *Mattibew* indeed is the only Evangelist who reports, that the chief Priests sealed and watched the sepulchre. All the four re-

late,

(p) P. 27, 28.

late, that the women went to the sepulchre; *John* takes no notice of their intention; the other three do; *Mark* and *Luke* inform us, that their design was to anoint the dead body; and *Matthew*, in more general terms, that they went to see or visit the sepulchre. And, as this is the whole of the matter, what is it, in the name of wonder, that can here intitle this Gentleman to assure the world, that these Historians disagree, are at variance, and contradict one another? It is true, they tell us different parts of the same history, each man as his own choice directed him; but is not this the common privilege, the universal practice of all Historians whatsoever? If, indeed, these parts were inconsistent, or could not agree together, the whole might be counted forgery. But, to make out any the least inconsistency, is beyond the power of our Philosopher. No doubt, he roundly asserts, that the story told by *Mark* and *Luke*, namely, that the women prepared spices, and went to the sepulchre in order to anoint the body of *Jesus*, contradicts what is reported by *Matthew*, or *Iheus*, that the sepulchre was neither guarded nor sealed. But, as I have already shown, that these two parts of the sacred history are quite consistent with one another; I shall here only presume to advise our Philosopher to assure the world, in the next edition of his book, that not only St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* disagree in this article with St. *Matthew*, but St. *Matthew* therein contradicts himself most shamefully: For, having told us, *the chief Priests went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch*; he immediately subjoins, *in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre*: Not surely to survey the curious workmanship, as it was a new sepulchre

sepulchre hewn out of a rock, but to visit the body of *Jesus* that was there intombed, and, one would think, to pay their last respects to their dear Lord, in anointing his dead body. And can it be thought, the women, on any account, would have adventured to go so early to visit the sepulchre, or the body there lying, if they had known there had been a watch set? So that St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* do by no means fly from St. *Matthew*'s story of watching the sepulchre, and tell another which contradicts it; they tell us, that the women went early to the sepulchre, and St. *Matthew* tells us the very same; which likewise is expressly related by St. *John*, who tells us no story different or inconsistent with all the rest. The agreement therefore of these Historians lies obvious to every considerate man. Is it not, then great pity to see a moral Philosopher, by an evil spirit of infidelity, *roused out of his intrenchments*, the nature and relations of things, a sacred regard to truth, and a tender concernment for other people's characters: *Why else does he quit them, and throw up others*, from whence he so daringly attacks truth, and shoots all the poisoned arrows of calumny?

It comes next in our way to consider what relates to the bribing of the soldiers. And upon this our Philosopher is of opinion, that had the watch been witnesses, as the history alledges, of what is said to have passed at the sepulchre upon the resurrection of *Jesus*, and had these reported those things to the Rulers of the *Jews*, neither could the chief Priests have bribed the soldiers, nor could the soldiers have taken a bribe. So that all these facts must likewise be counted mere forgery.

As for the Priests, "They (says the Gentleman) "as well as the people, were credulous of miracles, "being nursed up in the belief of them, which when "attested

" attested by their own party, persons whose veracity they could depend upon, as in this case, (not the flying reports of a giddy mob) must have prevented them from doing what it is pretended they did (q)." But how is the Gentleman so very sure, that had the watch reported the things said to have happened at the sepulchre, it would have prevented the priests from bribing the soldiers? He alleges that these things being attested by their own party, persons whose veracity they could depend upon, they must needs have believed them; " and the history (says he) supposes they did ; because they hired the watchmen to conceal the matter, and report what they would have believed, rather than what they themselves did believe (r)." But, without believing the report of the soldiers, might not the Rulers of the Jews have acted the part they did, from finding those soldiers very positive in their assertions, and that they might be apt to give the same account of things to the public? As it seems however highly probable, that the chief Priests and Pharisees believed the report of the soldiers, I will not debate this point with our Philosopher; I would only know of him, by what rule in his logic does he pretend to conclude, that the Jewish Rulers, upon their believing this report, would never have gone about to hire the watchmen to conceal it? Has he found out any general rule that enables him to prove, against matter of fact, that all mankind do always act according to their belief of things ; or that this conduct was most certainly observed by the chief Priests and Pharisees? Why, the Gentleman tells us, " if they believed Jesus was risen from the dead to be their King, (for it

" it is evident he could not be the *Messiah* they expected without being so) it seems more probable, instead of hiring men to conceal it by a false report, they would have listed soldiers in his service, and set up his banner at the temple gates, or at least would have silently and cautiously waited the event, lest they should be found guilty of fighting against God. For they must needs know, that a work so miraculous must be of God, and that therefore they could not overthrow it (s)." But alack notwithstanding they might believe the report of the soldiers, and presume Jesus was risen from the dead; yet such were their confirmed unconquerable prejudices, that, consistently with those, they could not possibly believe him to be the *Messiah*: So that, what our Philosopher here esteems more probable, has, in the nature and relations of things, no sort of foundation. Indeed, as it was, they might have known, as *Gamaliel* and the *Jewish Council* came to suspect afterwards (t), that a work so miraculous must be of God; and that therefore they could not overthrow it, but in their opposition must be found guilty of fighting against God. And what of all this! May not our Philosopher's knowledge of human nature lead him to confess, that such events naturally enough arise from the violence of human passions, which very frequently, at all hazards, must be gratified? Or, such things being so enormously wicked, does the Gentleman rather incline to think, that human nature is incapable of so great a height of impiety; and chuse rather to condemn them as mere forgery? By this means, I confess he would still reduce the truth of history to fewer articles: But where

(s) P. 36.

(t) Acts v. 34—40.

where is the Historian, whose reputation, at this rate, could be saved? Too many are the examples of this monstrous height of impiety, to which people's passions hurry them. It is said of *Augustus*, that, upon losing his fleet by a storm at sea, he cried out, *in spite of Neptune, he would have the victory*. Nor would he suffer the statue of that God to be carried in the solemn procession at the next *Circenian* games. Whether the passions of the chief Priests and Pharisees were under better discipline, and more moderate, it lies upon our Philosopher to explain.

But he pursues his argument, “ Could the *Jewish* Rulers (says he) so readily believe the report of the soldiers, and so foolishly think to conceal it, “ by hiring them to publish a lye (u).” That this report, as it came from their own party, persons whose veracity they could depend upon, could not but find credit with the *Jewish* Rulers, our Philosopher himself seems to have told us. And as for their thinking, by bribing the soldiers, “ to prevent that from being known, which, if true, “ they had all the reason in the world to believe “ could not be kept secret (x);” this, undoubtedly, speaking as a moral Philosopher, was very foolish; but such foolish things are frequent enough in the world, and shew us what a silly part even sage Rulers are tempted to act under the power of passion and prejudice. And yet this sort of conduct, as the world goes, must not be counted so very silly neither. Both in private and public life, among little and great politicians, nothing more common than to promote one’s designs, by hanging out, as it were, false colours, by misrepresenting things, by raising and propagating

gating false reports, thereby meaning to prevent that from being known, which they have all the reason in the world to believe, shall not be kept secret. Of this the instances are numberless, and many of them very successful. In the particular case now before us, we are told; *So they took the money, and did as they were taught. And this saying, His Disciples came by night and stole him away, is commonly reported among the Jews until this day (y).* It was not indeed universally believed among them; for great numbers, convinced of its falsehood, became Christians. It gained credit however with the bulk of the nation, who therefore still adhered to their old establishment. So that the chief Priests and Pharisees could not think their conduct in this article so very foolish, as our Philosopher would seem to represent it.

After all, it is alledged, that no wonders happened at the sepulchre, and consequently that no attempt was made to bribe the soldiers. And this the Gentleman would make out after this manner:

“ If miracles (says he) can be supposed to have no effect on human minds, why are they wrought? ”
 “ Such reports are not to be credited. When effects do not correspond, as consequences of the pretended cause, that cause is to be questioned. ”
 “ Such miracles destroy themselves. Wonders, wrought in vain, reflect upon the wisdom of the operator, it is exerting an extraordinary power to no purpose, and therefore shews a want of foresight. To suppose those miracles that were told the Priests and Pharisees, had no effect on them, tho’ they believed them, is to suppose, supernatural power is too weak to work upon the natural ”

(y) Matth. xxviii. 15.

"natural powers of man (z)." It is the real opinion of our Philosopher, that "every real miracle is an absurdity to common sense and understanding, and contrary to the attributes of God ; it is a thing utterly impossible (a)." And what pity is it that the Gentleman should have distracted his mind with other subjects, and not collected its whole strength in making out this wild assertion to the conviction of mankind ? This would have been doing more, than as yet he has been able to do. In a very concise manner, with less labour to himself, and greater credit to his philosophy, he would have thereby, to the great surprise of the world, all at once totally overthrown the whole of revelation. This however he may come to perform afterwards, which surely will *confound Believers, and comfort Infidels.* Here he is pleased to suppose the possibility of a real miracle, and argues that no such events could have happened, as is reported, at the sepulchre, because they were not attended with corresponding effects. But how comes our Philosopher to take upon him to tell the world, that no corresponding effects followed those miracles? Against whom, I wonder, has he formed his argument, and to what purpose has he made it so public? Does he not thereby mean to put a stop to the genuine effect of those miracles, the miracles that were wrought by our Saviour himself, that happened at his sepulchre, and that were afterwards done by his Apostles? The Gentleman cannot but know, that those miracles produced their effects very early, that they soon spread their prevailing influence far and wide thro' the world, and that at this day a great part of mankind still continue to acknowledge their power, and confess

(z) P. 35, 36.

(a) P. 52, 78.

confess themselves Christians. And let him remember, it is foretold, the gates of hell all the attempts of infidelity, shall not be able to prevent the natural consequences of those miracles, but they shall always prevail, and appear conspicuous to the world, till the last consummation of all things. What then does our Philosopher mean in telling us, "When effects do not correspond as consequences of the pretended cause, that cause is to be questioned, Such miracles destroy themselves." These, I do assure him, are not the miracles of *Jesus*.

Indeed, in the case of the chief Priests and Pharisees, neither the miracles at the sepulchre, nor those done by our Saviour when alive, were attended with their native consequences: And nothing more common than men's rejecting the counsel of God against themselves. "But (says our Philosopher) to suppose those miracles that were told the Priests, had no effect on them, tho' they believed them, is to suppose supernatural Power is too weak to work upon the natural powers of man." Here the Gentleman's philosophy enables him to talk very oddly. No doubt, the miracles of *Jesus* were the effects of supernatural power, and being offered to the world as proofs of his being the *Messiah*, or of his having come from God (*b*), though the Rulers of the *Jews* might believe the truth of the miracles, or the reality of the facts; yet being left to the use of their own faculties in apprehending the conclusion, herein, every Philosopher will allow, they might come to mistake widely, or to conclude in direct contradiction to the nature and relations of things; unless, perhaps, our Philosopher may be able to demonstrate, that the chief Priests and Pharisees were not liable to the common

(*b*) John v. 36, x. 24, 25, 38. xi. 41, 42, 43.

common weaknesses of human nature, ignorance, inadvertency, passion and prejudice. It cannot therefore be said, that supernatural power in its miraculous effects, wrought to convince mankind, that Jesus had his commission from heaven, is too weak to work upon the natural powers of man. These miraculous effects are in themselves full and strong proofs, and to a mind attentive, free and impartial, must necessarily appear so; but to minds blinded and biased with prejudices, such as were those of the Jewish Rulers, no conviction can be reached. And to force the human mind, is impossible. I am apt to think, the Gentleman will acknowledge, that people's belief of those wonders of Almighty Power, Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, every-where apparent in the works of Creation and Providence, and the great foundation of natural religion, is not attended with suitable consequences. And, upon this, should one take it in his head to contend, that those wonders are nothing real, but mere deceit and illusion, would our Philosopher judge this argument made sufficiently out in alledging, that to suppose those wonders of Almighty Power which people see in the frame of the universe, have no effect on them, though they believe them, is to suppose Almighty Power is too weak to work upon the natural powers of man? In short, our Philosopher's doctrine in this article, would make the truth of things to depend on the passions of men. So that, notwithstanding they might believe the truth of those miracles that happened at the sepulchre, the chief Priests and Pharisees may well be understood to have bribed the soldiers to report a lye. In this there is nothing incredible; and how credible it is that the soldiers took the bribe, we are next to consider.

" If the soldiers (says the Gentleman) saw and
" told

“ told the miracles that happened at the sepulchre, which, for the time, had so great an effect upon them, that they *became as dead men*; how could they take bribes to lye in so impudent a manner? They who saw this dreadful sight in the night, or at the approach of day, must have acted like men, must have had some remaining terrors to restrain them! Surely Gentlemen of the red cloth have some honour and truth in them, as well as Gentlemen in black or white: But here, it seems, both agreed together to damn their conscience against all convictions of sense. For what? Why, to prevent that from being known, which, if true, they had all the reason in the world to believe, could not be kept secret. And that they would by such means render themselves the objects of merited vengeance. It is strange, unaccountably strange! that those soldiers, who were just now almost struck dead with terror, should lose the impressions so easily and so soon, which it had made upon them, which but just before had scarce left them power to fly from the deadly fright that an earthquake and an Angel had put them in! That the shock it made, in their minds and members, should disappear with day-light! that for money they should all agree together to list themselves in the Priests service to fight against God, when, by so doing, they might expect some heavy judgment to fall upon them; but by affirming the truth boldly, conceive reasonable hopes of being Captains in the *Messiah's* victorious army, which was to conquer all nations (c).” Thus far the Gentleman in defence of the soldiers integrity. And, no doubt, Gentlemen of the red cloth have some honour and truth in them, as well as the Gentlemen in black or white; only,

(c) P. 34.

only, if those had no more than the *Jewish* Priests had, they do not seem to have been overstocked. Once indeed among the *Romans* a bribe was a thing monstruously odious. But may not our Philosopher condescend to confess, that bribes at this time had so far lost their infamy, that soldiers, as well as all other orders of men, scrupled not to yield to the temptation, and to damn their conscience, if they had any, against all convictions of both sense and reason. It is true, that, from what happened at the sepulchre, the watch were greatly frightened: But, with what abhorrence of a lye, with what regard to truth, or with what reverence towards God, does the Gentleman's philosophy teach him, this fright must have inspired them? Along with those wonderful events there were no particular moral instructions given them; nor could they well imagine, that those things had happened on their account, to threaten them for their past villainies, and to warn them that, without their becoming wiser and better, their case was dangerous. I may venture to say, the fright they were in could be no greater than *Caligula* used to be in, when it was thunder and lightning; and let the Gentleman tell us what reformation this fright did ever work upon the Tyrant, or what piece of impiety it ever prevented his committing. Our Philosopher is quite out of character, when he cries out in a surprise, "It is strange, unaccountably strange! that, for money, they should all agree together to list themselves in the Priests service to fight against God, when, by so doing, they might expect some heavy judgment to fall upon them." Pray, what is the God they could apprehend they were to fight against, and whose heavy judgment they might therefore expect to fall upon them? As for the God of the *Jews*, they did not

not acknowledge him, they neither feared nor honoured him ; and as they knew nothing of him, or utterly disclaimed him, they could expect neither good nor evil at his hands. And what concern either *Jupiter* or *Mars*, or any of their other deities, had in the matter, the Gentleman himself will determine. For my part, I am not able to understand, how the religion of the *Roman* soldiers, from what they saw at the sepulchre, could frighten them into an abhorrence of a bribe upon this occasion. *Jupiter* the Thunderer might well strike terror into *Caligula*, but, though confessed and worshipped, could not frighten him out of one instance of tyranny. Their fright therefore at the sepulchre, attended with no dread of divine vengeance, and as little moral instruction, could not prevent the soldiers from taking a bribe, and reporting a lye for it. Nor did they thereby forfeit any hopes of preferment in the *Messiah's* army, as in the excess of his wit our Philosopher represents it : A piece of wit, however, so void of all foundation in nature, that it cannot but expose the Author to great contempt and derision. As, therefore, the history fairly insinuates, one has good reason to believe, the soldiers apprehended nothing, but that their reporting they were asleep might come to the Governor's ears, and expose them to be condemned for neglect of duty ; and as to this, the chief Priests and Pharisees had promised to protect them.

But, to show the world that our Philosopher is able to put things in no disguise, that can prevent this story told by *Matthew* from appearing credible; let it be supposed, that the fright the soldiers got at the sepulchre, was attended with some religious dread, whereby their conscience might become somewhat scrupulous in the matter of a bribe. Now, what

what the Gentleman very unphilosophically alledges, with respect to the miracles of *Jesus*, none of which were in any measure discomposing to the human mind, may here fitly be applied; that such sights as the watch saw at the sepulchre, "do certainly work more upon the passions than the reason of men; for they wind up the one, but confound the other." As therefore the condition of the soldiers was meet passion, and not the least hold was taken of their reason, so soon as the cause was removed, or the danger was over, and they found themselves in safety, must not the passion begin immediately to abate, and soon come totally to subside, and, together with it, the religious dread they had been under? What space of time our Philosopher will have such impressions to last, I know not; nor do I believe he has it in his power to determine. It cannot well be thought, that the soldiers were in all this deadly fright when they came before the Council. In attending to the history, one cannot but apprehend, that they had time enough to recover of their sudden fright. It does not appear that all the watch went directly to the chief Priests from the sepulchre: Only some of the watch came into the city; these repair to the house of the chief Priest, and having got access, they tell him what they had seen at the sepulchre. And, betwixt this and their offering in Council a bribe to the soldiers, as a great many things must necessarily have intervened, so a great deal of time must necessarily have passed; and, during that space of time, may not one reasonably conceive, the sudden fright the soldiers had been put in at the sepulchre, came gradually to abate, and at length to be pretty much over? Our Philosopher is certainly very inaccurate, and must very little attend to things as they really

are, when he represents the soldiers taking a bribe, almost the same moment they came frightened from the sepulchre. But, granting that the watch, when they appeared "all of them before the Council," were not recovered of their fright, where is the improbability of their yielding to the temptation of a bribe? Or, after what manner does our Philosopher make out an inconsistency betwixt their being in a deadly fright this hour, and, the danger all over, their condescending next hour to receive the bribe offered them? Why, our Philosopher seems to think, that the fright they got had inspired them with a sense of God and religion, with a love of virtue and an abhorrence of vice; so that for the world they would not tell a lye, or take a bribe. If they were not Saints before, a most miraculous conversion! How improbable, or rather impossible, the nature of things, as I have before hinted, clearly demonstrates. This, however, is the Gentleman's opinion; and it lets us see, that, when it may serve his purpose, he can argue, in contradiction to himself, upon the side of miracles, or upon the good influence they must have on human minds. But let us here likewise suppose, that the soldiers were really frightened into this fit of religion, and that they brought along with them to the Council all their pious dispositions. When the chief Priests found the soldiers under some scruples of conscience at accepting a bribe and reporting a lye, and came to understand that their scruples arose from what they saw at the sepulchre, had they not the dexterity to persuade them, that the apparitions they talked of, were no other but the common ghosts and hobgoblins, mere spectres, at which only weak people, old women, and children were frightened? Or, was not the wit of those sage Gentlemen able

to divert the thoughts of the soldiers, to engage them on other objects, and so far to compose their minds as to make way for their old temper and bias? Our Philosopher cannot but know, that a ready, a most effectual way to break the force of one passion, is to raise that of another. And, as the love of money is a passion that appears early in human nature, and that seems so prevalent as to be capable of engaging most men to do any thing, had not the chief Priests address enough to manage this inbred, powerful passion, to which the soldiers could be no strangers, so as to raise its force superior to any thing that can be ascribed to that new-born, pious passion, or that sudden fit of religion, with which, it is supposed, the watch had been seized? How very soon those fearful passions, however mixed with religion, that arise from uncommon, wonderful events, sometimes very alarming and dreadful, do yield to the constant, reigning passions of the human mind, is every where manifest. The Idumeans encamped under the walls of the town, were greatly frightened with thunder, and lightning, and other terrible prodigies; and, what is more, they apprehended that God was incensed against them for this their expedition against Jerusalem: And yet, no sooner were they let into the city, than, even amidst those frightful events, they committed the most outrageous cruelties (*d*). So that, to a Philosopher who understands human nature, it can never “ appear strange, unaccountably strange ! that those soldiers, who were now almost struck dead with terror, should lose the impressions so easily, and so soon, which it had made upon them.” And thus we see, that let the Gentleman put it in all the different lights he

(d) Joseph. de bell. Jud. lib. iv. cap. 4. § 5. &c.

he is capable, he shall never be able to prevent its appearing highly credible, that the soldiers, as St. Matthew reports, *took the money, and did as they were taught.*

Nor, how much soever it may surprize the Gentleman, is it, in any degree, incredible, that St. Matthew “ should know what the watch felt and “ saw ; (not before those that went to the sepul-“ chre saw the watch, as our Philosopher very fool-“ ishly insinuates ; but when he wrote his history;) “ and what the Rulers did in their Privy Council “ (e).” A Privy Council ! a mean artifice in a moral Philosopher : By what authority does he call it so ? But, as the Gentleman, in spite of his morality, likes to deal in such little fetches, and they are really below one’s notice, I shall only observe, every body is sensible, there are a great many chances for things transacted even in a Privy Council, especially after some time is elapsed, to come to the knowledge of the public. And, in the present case, supposing all the other Counsellors to have kept the secret (f), is it not more than probable, as they were under no oath of secrecy, that Joseph and Nicodemus, who were the friends of Jesus, and favoured his interest, advertised the Disciples of all that had passed ? Instead of discussing this article, our Philosopher assumes the air of one in a hurry. As if quite tired of his argument, and not caring to have an answer, he leaves it hastily, and, in going off, tells his Reader in a huff, very decisive and peremptory ! “ If they bribed the soldiers to spread a “ false report, and they spread it; no doubt, they “ bribed them to keep counsel too, and they kept “ it (g).” This, however, is the only reason our Philosopher is pleased to afford us, in order to satisfy

(e) P. 38.

(f) Vid. Joh. xii. 42.

(g) P. 38.

fy us, that the secret was kept, and never came to St. Matthew's ears. Here then it is, *the chief Priests had taught the soldiers to be villains*; and, having so well instructed them, *they might safely rely on their honesty*. A most powerful reason, and a mighty foundation for confidence! Whether our Philosopher is among those Prophets that are subject to dream, and sometimes to dream waking, may be a question; but one can little doubt, whether his eyes are holden, that he shall not discern either the nature of things, or the truth of history. Alas! the unhappy event at the sepulchre, that so much alarmed the chief Priests, was gone abroad before the Jewish Council had made it a secret. As I before hinted, it was only some of the watch that went into the city to the chief Priests; as for the rest, they seem to have gone directly to their garrison, where, from the nature of things, we must necessarily conceive they told their fright among their comrades, and after what manner it had happened. And thus the whole story being publicly known among all the Roman soldiers, it could not but come to spread all over the city; and should any of the watch be found talking otherwise, this language would be easy to be accounted for; nor could those lessons of honesty, taught them by the chief Priests, well prevent the soldiers themselves from explaining it. I doubt not, but as they were secured at the hands of the Governor, the large money they had received would afford them many a merry bottle, over which to laugh at the folly of the Jewish Rulers. I dare say, the Gentleman is of opinion, that such sort of people cannot well be thought to have employed their money to any other or better purposes: Unless, perhaps, he may imagine, that the pious dispositions they had conceived from

from their fright, might incline them to dispose of it in charitable uses, thereby to express their thankfulness and gratitude for their great deliverance.

Upon this article, I have only to consider this other objection. "It is observable, (says the Gentleman) that though this story of the sealing and guarding the sepulchre is of great consequence, being written to prove, that the Disciples did not steal the body away by night, and was a public action, it is received only on the report of a single testimony. In other Writers, this would look like an interpolation, independent of the main history; because those that wrote after, are quite silent about it, so far are they from giving us any corroborating instances, for confirmation sake, to confound Infidels, and comfort Believers. For, if this was as publicly done, as is pretended, it must have been publicly known, and could not escape their notice, or been unworthy their regard. Therefore, here might be a suspicion of forgery in the relation, but that we are well satisfied of the honesty of these sacred Historians; for every thing they wrote is as true as the Gospel (*b*)."
Thus our Philosopher retails both his reason and his wit. But a head whose only furniture is confused infidel notions, imposes upon the mind, and represents things quite distorted and unnatural. So far is the sealing and guarding the sepulchre from looking like an interpolation, that it appears most manifestly a natural branch of the history. The chief Priests ascribed the miracles of Jesus to Beelzebub, and yet they were greatly alarmed at them; the people believed them real, and of God, and therefore they judged them cursed; they were foretold, that Jesus was to rise from the dead; and,

and, upon this, apprehending that his Disciples might come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people he was risen, which they suspected would be attended with consequences more dangerous than any thing that had yet happened ; to prevent this, was it not natural for them to seal and guard the sepulchre ? This event therefore can be no interpolation. And how comes the Gentleman to represent it as independent of the main history, the history of the resurrection ? He seems to think, it is of great consequence, as it meant to prove, that the Disciples did not steal the body away by night. And does not this give every sober man to understand, it has a natural connection with the history of the resurrection ? It proves that the Disciples did not steal away the body ; the body, however, was gone ; the chief Priests could not shew it ; what then, upon such an event, is the world led to apprehend ? In a word, so far is the sealing and guarding the sepulchre from being independent of the history of the resurrection, that, I am afraid, it is the strong light it casts upon this event, that has engaged the Gentleman to prostitute his philosophy, in using so many arts to prove it a forgery. He says, indeed, it must be an interpolation, independent of the main history, because those that wrote after, are quite silent about it. And does the Gentleman really think, that the silence of after Historians can either satisfy the world, that such a particular fact mentioned by a former Historian, is an interpolation ; or, in spite of their senses, convince them, it has no connection with the main history ? Here, be the silence ever so profound, the connection is glaring, and shews it no interpolation. Our Philosopher pretends too, that those " who wrote after are far from giving us " any corroborating instances for confirmation sake,

" to

"to confound Infidels, and comfort Believers." As for Believers, I can assure the Gentleman, they stand in no need of comfort in what relates to the Gospel-history. And, how far Infidels are confounded, the confusion and perplexity, the distress they are visibly in, when opposing the *Christian* revelation, the buffoonry they fly to, instead of sober sense and reason, the unbecoming, the reproachful and blasphemous language they discharge with respect to persons and things, which the wisest men, the greatest Philosophers, and the laws of their country count sacred ; these things, open and notorious, abundantly demonstrate. But, what is that whereof those that wrote after, have given us no corroborating instances ? The Gentleman tells us, that St. Matthew wrote this story of the sealing and guarding the sepulchre, in order to prove, that the Disciples did not steal the body away by night. And, do the other Evangelists give us no corroborating instances confirming the same truth ? Upon the face of the history in *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*, so open is this truth, and apparent, that a man must obstinately wink and shut his eyes not to see it.

But, as our Philosopher's Logic, here and elsewhere, enables him to argue from the bare circumstances of a fact's being attested only by one evidence, that that fact must be held a forgery ; I shall here a little consider this principle with respect to the sealing and guarding the sepulchre, which, he bids the world observe, "is received only on the report of a single testimony." This, perhaps, may be thought not worth while ; and, indeed, the same may be said of his whole book, but in the *Christian* controversy with modern Infidels, one is sometimes obliged to explain how two and two make four. I would therefore beg leave to ask the Gentleman,

Gentleman, does the intrinsic or the real truth of facts or of human actions, depend upon so extraneous a thing as the testimony of any whatever number of witnesses? If not, how is it possible to conceive, that from our having only one Historian to attest a fact, it follows, the fact never happened, and is a forgery? In many instances, people may have no more than the report of one Historian, and whilst we have no more, shall we account the fact to be forged; but, when we happen to find other Historians concurring, must we then repute it to be real? As such mysteries are beyond my comprehension, I shall only say, it appears to me, that our moral Philosopher has been a little too free with St. Matthew's character, and shewn but too great haste to find him guilty of forgery, in reporting the sepulchre was sealed and guarded.

Indeed, as the truth or existence of facts, that lie not within the reach of our own senses, can come to our knowledge no otherwise, but by the testimony of other people; so, our belief as to the certainty of those facts, ought to be proportioned to the degree of confidence one has reason to place in the reporters. But, to deny the existence of a fact, or to judge it a mere forgery, purely because there is only one witness attesting it, how can this be counted but foolish and ridiculous? No doubt, the appointment is very wise, whereby in civil courts, the truth of a fact cannot be admitted without the testimony of, at least, two concurring witnesses. But, to a Philosopher who forms his judgment of the truth of facts, upon the nature of things, what signifies this arbitrary institution? Very frequently as a Judge, for want of legal evidence, is a man obliged to pronounce against the truth of a fact; while in his conscience, as a Philosopher, from the

nature of things, or the testimony of one single witness, he has been convinced of its certainty. And, I dare say, the Gentleman himself is able to point out one or more persons, whose single testimony he would prefer before that of some twenty, and which he would judge sufficient evidence to ascertain the truth of any matter of fact whatsoever. It is not therefore the bare circumstance of a fact's being reported only by one Historian, that can prevent a Philosopher from confessing its certainty. Were it otherwise, I am afraid that very few historical facts, when narrowly examined, would be found able to maintain their credit. If the Gentleman will consider the history of *Josephus* concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, he will find what a number of valuable articles in the *Roman* and *Jewish* history, hitherto regarded as undoubted truths, would, by his principle, all come to be condemned as forgery. Let it therefore be observed, that in the case of a single witness, as in the case of a greater number, it is the circumstances and character, the capacity and honesty of the reporter, which, by all means, we ought carefully to consider: And when these, in all other instances, upon a strict examination, are found unexceptionable and good; what is the maxim in philosophy that forbids us to credit his single testimony, with respect to such a particular fact, that happens not to be mentioned by any of his contemporaries: So that if our Philosopher means in this article, to fasten an imputation of forgery upon St. *Mattbew*, all the rules of fair dealing, the common voice of mankind, call upon him to produce other sort of evidence, than this bare circumstance of his being single in his report, and to shew us, either in other instances, that this Evangelist is clearly guilty of falsehood, or, that such

is the nature of and circumstances of the present article, that it cannot consist with truth, but therein the reporter has evidently forfeited his veracity. This, I suppose, he will pretend he has done; but in what manner, or how successfully, and whether he ought to renew his labour, the world will judge. Here he goes about to support his charge of forgery, from St. Matthew's being alone in reporting the sealing and guarding the sepulchre, after this manner:

" If this (says he) was as publicly done, as is pretended, it must have been publicly known, " and could not escape their notice (the notice of " the other Evangelists) or been unworthy their " regard." And I am really glad to find, that *Mark*, and *Luke*, and *John*, have come to share in our Philosopher's good opinion. For the present, he considers them as men of judgment and honesty, who wrote according to their knowledge and the importance of things; and therefore upon their good sense and integrity he lays the weight of his charge of forgery against St. Matthew. And is it not abundantly diverting to see our Philosopher, upon every proper occasion, shifting the scene, and representing things not as truth, but as passion directs him? The Evangelists are men of veracity, when their authority is so lucky as to help his argument forward; but, when it comes across, as it most frequently does, they are then cheats and impostors. Here, as it happens, *Mark*, and *Luke*, and *John*, are men of judgment and honesty. And let us confess, with our Philosopher, that these Evangelists wrote according to their knowledge and the importance of things. But how shall we come to understand, that they wrote every thing they knew, that was not unworthy their regard? This, every

every body knows, is not the way of other Historians; and the world is apprised, that this was not the way of the Evangelists. They knew undoubtly, that the chief Priests had sealed and guarded the sepulchre, and yet they take no notice of it in their history. What other reasons they had for this silence, no man can determine; but it may be confidently said, they judged the recording that event not necessary to their purpose. It is the Gentleman's opinion, that St. Matthew wrote his account of the sealing and guarding the sepulchre, in order to prove that the disciples did not steal away the dead body. And, if there had been no other way of satisfying the world as to this truth, no doubt, the other Evangelists would have taken it. But as every article in their account concerning the resurrection, is a demonstration, that the disciples neither did nor could steal away the body of Jesus, they seem to have had no occasion to relate that particular event. Besides, that in their history they do not seem to have had precisely the same view with the Evangelist Matthew; who, one has reason to think, wrote for the information of the Jews in particular, and to reconcile them to the character of Jesus. This appears from several passages in St. Matthew's history; I shall mention these three.

The other Evangelists do indeed observe, that the high Priest put this question to Jesus, *Art thou the Christ, the son of the blessed (k)?* But St. Matthew observes further, that the high Priest propounded his question in a very awful and solemn manner, and with the utmost earnestness, *I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God (l)?* Now hereby St. Matthew gives the Jews to understand, that so far

(k) Mark xiv. 61. (l) Matth. xxvi. 63. Vid. Joh. x. 24.

were their chief Priests and Rulers from being quite satisfied, and at full ease in their conscience, that *Jesus* was a malefactor, as they pretended, or a cheat and impostor, that they were mightily perplexed as to his real character, and were under the greatest doubts and misgivings of mind, having no certainty but he might be their *Messiah*. For what else, in common sense, can one understand from this adoration made to *Jesus*, with such deep concern and so much solemnity? Surely he that made it was extremely anxious, and inwardly alarmed with suspicions and jealousies.—Again, St. Matthew relates this very remarkable passage: *Then Judas which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, what is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself, &c.* (m). Thus the Jews have it openly told them, that their chief Priests had a very uncommon and alarming confession made before them, loudly declaring the innocence of *Jesus*. The very person, who, tempted with a bribe, had betrayed *Jesus* into their hands, who had lived in intimacy with him, who knew the truth of his miracles, the justness of his pretensions, and the uprightness of his designs; this very person, struck with a piercing remorse of conscience, in great agony comes to the chief Priests and elders, confesses he had betrayed innocent blood, abhors the reward of his treachery, casts it down in the temple, and, not able to bear the stings of his guilty soul, went off, and put an end to his present wretchedness. This is a testimony sealed

(m) Matth. xxvii, 3—10.

fealed after a fearful manner. So that, in the violence of his death, *Judas* gave a strong proof of the conviction of his guilt, and of the innocence of *Jesus*. And, however, in defiance to humanity and justice, the chief Priests were absolutely regardless of this unhappy man's condition, and of the innocence of *Jesus*; yet, to preserve the memory of this proof, led by the hand of Providence, they erected, as it were, a lasting monument: *With the price of the blood of Jesus*, the bribe which *Judas* had received, and which in sad despair he had thrown back again, *they purchased the Potters field to bury strangers in*. Wherefore, says St. Matthew, *that field was called the field of blood unto this day*. And herein, the *Jews* are likewise told, one of their own prophecies is exactly fulfilled.—The other passage I mention, is this we are now explaining, wherein St. Matthew informs the *Jews*, that, upon recollecting that *Jesus* said, while he was yet alive, *After three days I will rise again*, their chief Priests, by an address to *Pilate*, having obtained a guard, *did seal and guard the sepulchre, lest his Disciples come by night and steal him away*; and that the watch having fled because of an earthquake, and an Angel that came and rolled back the stone from the door, they bribed the soldiers to dissemble the matter, and to report to the world, that his Disciples had come by night, and stole him away while they slept. And thus the *Jews* are plainly told, that their Rulers used all necessary precautions to prevent a fraud; but not being able to guard against any thing else, when those wonders happened at the sepulchre, they went about to conceal the truth, and to stifle that evidence, which, coming abroad, might induce mankind strongly to suspect a resurrection.

Here

Here therefore, the suspicion and jealousy, the great perplexity the chief Priests were under, as to the real character of *Jesus*; the alarming penitent confession of *Judas* in their presence, loudly proclaiming the innocence of *Jesus*; their purchasing a field with the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the blood of *Jesus*, wherein one of their own prophecies was fulfilled; and their bribing the soldiers to report a falsehood, and to suppress those wonders that happened at the sepulchre, which, made publick, could not but be regarded as a prelude of the resurrection of *Jesus*; all these particulars, as they peculiarly belong to the *Jews*, so they seem to have a natural tendency to reconcile them to the character and cause of *Jesus*, at least to awaken them to a serious inquiry into the truth and certainty of things. And we see that the facts which St. *Matthew* chuses to relate, are not the deeds of mean and obscure persons, not known in the world, or where to be found, should one incline to have information from themselves; but they are the deeds of public characters, of the chief Priests and Elders, the Rulers of the *Jews* acting in Council, openly and in the face of the world. Nor do the place and time of the publication of those facts favour an imposture. They were published at *Jerusalem*, where the whole was transacted, and while most of the actors, and vast numbers of the witnesses must have been alive, able to satisfy mankind as to their truth and reality; circumstances, in which hardly a fool or a madman would attempt to impose upon the world.

Now, as from these passages, among others, it seems manifest, that St. *Matthew*, in composing his history, had it in his view to inform the *Jews* in particular, and to reconcile them to the character of *Jesus*; so the other Evangelists having no such particular

particular design, it can be no matter of wonder to find in him several passages, which they take no notice of. And to alledge, that such particular articles in any Historian, are forged, because other Historians are silent about them, is so senseless and extravagant a rule of judging of the truth of history, that thereby all Historians may be brought mutually to ruin each other's reputation. Thus, therefore, St. Matthew's being single in the article of the sealing and guarding the sepulchre, can be no objection to the truth of it : Nor can the silence of the other Evangelists render it in any degree suspicious.

I come now, with the Gentleman, to *the third period of time*, where he considers and compares the testimony of the four Evangelists, and the other New Testament Writers, concerning the appearances of Jesus, after he is said to be risen. And as ideas, when compounded, are generally perplexed, he therefore distinguishes the accounts of these Historians into separate articles. And upon these I join issue with him.

But, *first*, in general ; as in every matter of fact, wherein several Historians are concerned, there are two things to be considered, namely, the fact itself, and then the circumstances with which that fact is said to be attended, I would gladly be informed, whether, supposing those Historians to agree in their testimony as to the fact itself, yet if they differ in their account of the circumstances, their evidence must totally be rejected, and the main fact, as to the truth of which they concur, be counted a forgery ? For my part, I incline to think, that in all such cases it ought duly to be regarded, whether in their account of the circumstances, those Historians do really disagree, or clash and interfere with one another, or whether they report only different circumstances,

cumstances, which may all very well consist and agree together. In the former case, (which is far from being that of the Gospel-history) where the circumstances are contradictory the one to the other; if those circumstances are of such a nature as to make, as it were, a part of the main action, these contradictory accounts may, no doubt, discredit the whole evidence. But if the circumstances are only such, that the main action has no dependence upon them, I am not able to conceive upon what principles of reason, contradictory accounts, as to such circumstances, can invalidate the testimony of Historians with respect to the truth of the main event, wherein they plainly agree. In their accounts of the death of *Augustus*, Historians contradict one another as to the circumstances of *Tiberius* being present; and yet no body, for this reason, calls in question the testimony of those Historians, when they all agree in reporting, that this Emperor died at *Nola*. As for the other case, (which is that of the Gospel-history) where the circumstances are only different, and may very well consist and agree together: As every action or event is attended with various circumstances, and every Historian is at liberty to report whichever of those circumstances he may judge fitting; how can one but think it the absurdest thing in nature, to reject the evidence of different Historians, all concurring as to the truth of a particular fact, merely because in their accounts of the circumstances attending that main fact, they happen to differ or vary, without at all interfering with one another? As I just now observed, even plain contradictions in the circumstances of a fact are no ground for a charge of forgery against Historians, and far less can these Historians be liable to such a charge, who relate indeed different circumstances.

but all consistent and agreeing together. This, I say, is the case of the Gospel-historians; and whether our Philosopher has any thing else to object to their evidence, with respect to the appearances of Jesus, I now proceed to examine.

The first article he takes notice of, is that of the appearance of Jesus to *Mary Magdalene*. And, upon this, the Gentleman tells us, "the witnesses do not agree whether Jesus appeared to one woman only, or to two. Whether it was in their way, as they were going to tell the Disciples, or at the sepulchre, after the Disciples had been told what had been there discovered. Whether Jesus was held by the feet, or whether he would not suffer himself to be touched. Whether he sent word to his Disciples, that he was going to *Galilee*, or going to heaven (n)." But, as it is confessed, that three of those witnesses, namely, *Mattew*, *Mark*, and *John*, do agree, that Jesus did appear to *Mary Magdalene*, what is it that can discredit this testimony in this particular? Why, they agree in no other circumstance. Very well. If our Philosopher, by their not agreeing, here means, that each of those witnesses takes notice of some circumstances relating to this event, that are not mentioned by the others; this is a truth that has been known to the world ever since the publication of their histories. But if he thereby means, that in the evidence they severally offer to the world concerning this appearance, they clash and contradict one another, this is a falsehood too gross to be imposed upon any of mankind, by any Philosopher whatsoever.

We are told, not only by *Mattew*, but by *Mark* and *Luke*, that, along with *Mary Magdalene*, other women went to the sepulchre early in the morning

(n) P. 40.

morning of the resurrection. And, as for *Mary Magdalene's* being always named first, one may reasonably conclude, that she was the principal person; so regarding her in this light, it cannot but be allowed, that the appearance of *Jesus* to the women, may, with great propriety, be called his appearance to *Mary Magdalene*. Here, therefore, understanding this appearance of *Jesus* to *Mary Magdalene* as a particular event by itself, I hope, different Historians, without exposing themselves to the charge of forgery, may have leave to mention, in their account of this event, what particular circumstances they shall judge most proper. Thus *Mark*, while he tells us that *Jesus* appeared to *Mary Magdalene*, takes notice only of this one circumstance, it was his first appearance. This same circumstance, tho' not expressly mentioned, is easily collected from *John*; who, besides that, relates several other circumstances. And *Matthew* not only represents this appearance of *Jesus* as the first, and mentions some circumstances related by *John*; but he likewise observes, that when *Jesus* appeared to *Mary Magdalene* the other *Mary* was with her; so that, instead of saying *Jesus* appeared to *Mary Magdalene*, he says *Jesus* appeared to the women. What then can our Philosopher mean, when he tells us, "The witnessess do not agree whether *Jesus* appeared to one woman only, or to two?" Does he mean, that, in this article, the evidence is contradictory; one witness affirming that *Jesus* appeared to *Mary Magdalene* and the other *Mary*, and the other witness declaring, that he appeared not to the other *Mary*, but to *Mary Magdalene* alone? If he has here found such an inconsistency, or any thing like it, his philosophy carries him beyond the common sense of mankind. Certain it is, that different circumstances

stances relating to the same event, all consistent together, mentioned by different Historians, can never expose those Historians as clashing with one another, and thereby blasting each other's credit. We learn from *Suetonius*, that *Anthony* offered a royal crown to *Julius Caesar*. *Dio* takes notice of the same event ; but he tells us, that *Anthony* was therein joined by his *Sacerdotal Colleagues*. Now, shall we here cry out with our Philosopher, The story is wrong ; it cannot be credited ; here is plain forgery ; " the witnesses do not agree, whether this offer was made by one man only, or by many ? " Nothing can be more ridiculous !

But our Philosopher will not only have the Gospel-historians to discredit one another, while they severally relate different circumstances of the same event ; but he must needs have St. *Luke* to contradict them all as to the event itself." " St. *Luke*, (says the Gentleman) who gives a particular account of the women, and what passed between them and the Angels, says (ver. 23.) that his body they found not ; but, if they had seen him alive or dead, they must have found or seen his body ; therefore, according to St. *Luke*, they saw him not (o)." St. *Luke*, indeed, does not mention the appearance of *Jesus* to *Mary Magdalene* or the women ; but he by no means says or even insinuates the contrary, or that he never did appear to them. In his story of the two Disciples going to *Emmaus*, he tells us of an article of their conversation, that the women found not the body, but saw a vision of Angels, which said that *Jesus* was alive. It is this our Philosopher lays hold of as a contradictory evidence given by St. *Luke*. But

(o) P. 41.

But may not this Gentleman bear to be told, that in his conclusion his infidelity seems to have out-run his philosophy? *they found not his body.*—In common language, in all propriety of speech, this can only signify, they found not his lifeless body as it was taken down from the cross, still lying dead in the sepulchre; this body was gone, not to be found, and the sepulchre empty. “But, (says our Philosopher) “had they seen him alive or dead, they must “have found or seen his body.” Quibbling, at any rate, is contemptible, and what name it deserves to bear, when employed in an argument so serious and important, the Reader will determine. This Gentleman has certainly as much philosophy as enables him to distinguish betwixt a person and a corps, and what is the different language that is proper to express these different ideas. I shall only say, that understanding this phrase, *they found not his body*, as common language must determine it, it is impossible that any philosophy whatsoever can here conclude, that the women their not finding the dead body of Jesus, as we are told in *Luke*, bears a contradiction to their seeing him alive, as is reported by *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *John*. On the contrary, these two events are so very consistent, or so well connected together, that the former is a strong presumption of the latter, or they plainly infer one another. And I strongly incline to think, that the two Disciples had heard what the women had said concerning their having seen Jesus alive. For otherwise, when they came to observe, that upon the report of the women, certain of their number went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said, that the body was gone and not to be found in the sepulchre, why do they immediately add, *but him they saw not?* One should think that the adversative particle

particle *but*, does in this particular fairly contradict the men from the women ; letting us know that the women had seen Jesus, but the men saw him not. And as for the two Disciples, their taking no notice of this article in the report of the women to the Apostles of what had passed at the sepulchre; as they believed their account of the appearance of Jesus, as little as they did that of the appearance of Angels, but took all they said to be pure imagination, might they not therefore very naturally, without distinguishing the different events, throw the whole under one head, and say in general, “*the women, when they found not his body, came saying, that they had also seen a vision of Angels, which said that he was alive?*” Our Philosopher indeed makes a strange use of it ; but certain it is, that in relating a story people do not always mention every fact or every circumstance that happens ; this is farther obvious in this passage of *Luke* now before us : The women acquaint the Disciples of what they had discovered at the sepulchre. *Then, (says Luke) arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre, and stooping down, he beheld the linen cloaths laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.* Here we are informed of none that went to the sepulchre but *Peter* : And yet, at the same time, *Luke* very well knew that *Peter* went not thither alone. For, as he reports the story of the two Disciples, they represent more than one going to the sepulchre ; *And certain (say they) of them which were with us, went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said, but him they saw not.* And, as it thus evidently appears, that St. *Luke*’s only mentioning *Peter* as going to the sepulchre, is far from being a proof of his not knowing of any one that accompanied him ; so

the

the two Disciples, their only mentioning that the women found not the body of *Jesus*, can as little be brought in proof of their not knowing, or having heard, that the women said, they had seen *Jesus*. And, after the same manner, I may here observe, no moral Philosopher can justly alledge, in the case of *Mark* and *John*, that they knew nothing of the other *Mary*'s having seen *Jesus*, because they mention no other women but *Mary Magdalene*, to whom he appeared. The Gentleman allows, when *Peter* went to the sepulchre, *that peradventure John went likewise*; though *Luke* mentions *Peter* only : And, for the sake of being consistent and uniform, might he not likewise have allowed, when *Mary Magdalene* saw *Jesus*, *that peradventure the other Mary saw him also*; though *Mark* and *John* mention *Mary Magdalene* only ? But, without regarding the things themselves, our Philosopher must dissemble or confess them, as may best answer his purpose. Thus *John*'s being at the sepulchre, helps to prove, as he manages it, that there was there no appearance of Angels; and consequently, that, as he intends it should be, the Evangelists contradict one another: But to confess, that the other *Mary* saw *Jesus*, this would hurt his upright design of finding out contradictions in the Gospel-history. The world is left to judge, how far such conduct suits the character of a moral Philosopher.

Thus it appears, that, by no one rule of his profession, is our Philosopher supported in concluding, that, in this article of the women's seeing *Jesus*, *Luke*'s evidence is contradictory to that of *Matthew*, *Mark* and *John*. Indeed, the Gentleman is pleased to alledge, that the meaning he has affixed to this passage of *Luke*, is confirmed by the account we have concerning *Peter* and *John*, viz, their not seeing *Jesus*

fus at the sepulchre ; but how their not seeing *ye-sus* at the sepulchre, can be a confirmation of the women's not having there seen him, is beyond my comprehension. Is it possible, that our Philosopher can argue at this rate, *Jesus* did not appear to *Peter* and *John* at the sepulchre ; and therefore, neither did he there appear to the women who staid after them ?

But, understanding this passage of St. *Luke*, they found not his body, as the Gentleman would have it, they found not his body dead nor alive ; what good reason has he to be so positive, that this is evidence contradictory to that of *Matthew*, *Mark* and *John* ? When Historians, not pretending to write a diary, or a minute account of every particular event, in the order of time it happens, with all its several circumstances, do only give us a brief summary of things, without regarding the order of time, but throwing things of like nature together ; as in this case, if we go about to settle the order or succession and other circumstances of things, (and very frequently, they are not to be understood or distinguished) it is impossible precisely to determine them, without either considering the nature and circumstances of things, or comparing different parts of the same Historian, or different Historians who mention or write upon the same subject ; so, if our Philosopher will permit us to use the liberty which all mankind take in explaining the truth of history, I am apt to think, if we compare the different Historians together, in relation to this article, we shall find good reason to pronounce, there is here no contradictory evidence.

The Gentleman himself observes, that *John* has told the world, that *Mary Magdalene*, or, as I have above explained this article, the women, were twice at the sepulchre. At their first visit, we are informed,

formed, they neither saw Jesus nor his dead body : But when they were there a second time, Jesus appeared to them. When therefore St. Luke relates, that *they found not his body*, understanding it to signify, they saw not Jesus himself ; every impartial man will allow, that this passage plainly points at what happened at the first visit the women made to the sepulchre. I confess, our Philosopher may alledge, that this visit, as mentioned by St. John, was attended by no vision of Angels ; whereas in this mentioned by St. Luke, there was a vision of Angels, a circumstance which refers it, according to Matthew and John, to that visit wherein they saw Jesus. But, in his account of what happened at the first visit, does St. John insinuate any the least thing that can infer, there was at that time no appearance of Angels ? And, can his bare silence, as to this article, be held, at any rate, to signify a denial of it ? It is upon this absurd, extravagant opinion, peculiar to himself, that our Philosopher's objections against the truth of the Gospel-history are grounded. And, indeed, the opinion is so evidently absurd, that nothing more evident can be proposed, whereby to shew its absurdity : It blasts the credit of all Historians. Tacitus reports, that Domitian was along with his uncle Sabinus in the capitol, when Vitellius's men laid siege to it. Of this circumstance, Suetonius takes no notice. Must we therefore say, " Here " is evidence contradictory to Tacitus ?" At this rate, Suetonius not only contradicts Tacitus, but he proves contradictory to himself ; for this circumstance he particularly mentions in his life of Domitian. After the same manner, Matthew and Luke having related, that they rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre of our Lord ; Luke and John, as they neglect this circumstance, must be understood

to contradict it : And not only so, but to contradict themselves ; for, in their account of the women's going to the sepulchre, they seem, each of them, fairly to insinuate, that a stone was laid at the mouth of it. However, therefore, our Philosopher may be affected towards this doctrine, I cannot doubt, but all mankind will allow, that the bare omission of such a particular fact or circumstance by one Historian, can never be held contradictory evidence with respect to that fact or circumstance, when related by another Historian. So that, as St. John's taking no notice of the women's having seen a vision of Angels, at their first visit to the sepulchre, can never be understood as a denial of such a vision ; so if we here understand, that when the two Disciples going to *Emmaus*, as St. Luke reports it, do tell us, that the women *found not the body of Jesus*, their meaning is, they saw neither the dead body nor the living person of Jesus ; in this case, nothing can hinder us from resting confident, that the vision these two Disciples speak of happened to the women at their first visit to the sepulchre. And, indeed, as these Disciples designed a journey to *Emmaus*, it may be thought very possible, that they had left the other Disciples, before the women had come back the second time from the sepulchre, and must therefore have as yet heard nothing as to the appearance of Jesus to *Mary Magdalene*. Thus again, our Philosopher may be satisfied, he has no authority from St. Luke to conclude, in opposition to the other Evangelists, that the women saw not Jesus.

The Gentleman next objects, that the witnesses contradict each other, as to the place and time of this appearance of Jesus : They do not, says he, agree, " whether it was in their way, as they were " going to tell the Disciples, or at the sepulchre,

" after

" after the Disciples had been told what had been
" there discovered." As to the place, St. Matthew relates, that, *as the women went to tell his Disciples, behold, Jesus met them*: And, according to St. John, *Mary Magdalene* having stooped down into the sepulchre, and there spoke with Angels, *ἐπάρη εἰς τὰ οὐρανά*, she was turned in her way back, and saw *Jesus* standing. This, the Gentleman rightly conceives, happened at the sepulchre: But would alledge, from St. Matthew, that it happened after the women had left the sepulchre, and were on their way to the Disciples. Indeed, I know not whether our Philosopher has any *data*, upon which his Geometry may enable him to determine, how far the women were advanced in their way, at which distance they cannot, in common language, be said to be at the sepulchre. But, I am pretty certain, he never will be able to shew the contrary, if it shall be asserted, that the women might have been two, or three, or half a dozen steps, or not without the walls of the garden, where the sepulchre was, when *Jesus* appeared to them. And, in any of these cases, will not common language suffer us to say, *Jesus* appeared to the women at the sepulchre? When therefore St. Matthew tells us, that *the women departed quickly from the sepulchre, and as they went to tell his Disciples, Jesus met them*; can our Philosopher shew us, that before this happened, they had made more than one step in their way, or were farther advanced than just turning about for that purpose, or, if he pleases, had run beyond the walls of the garden? But let the Gentleman, by his phrase, *at the sepulchre*, mean what he will, how comes he to represent *Matthew* and *John* contradicting one another upon this article? *Matthew* reports, that the women saw *Jesus* as they were going to his Disciples;

ples ; and *John* tells us, that they saw *Jesus* (as they were returning, or) as they had turned in their way back. Our Philosopher must be extremely envious of the character of the sacred Historians, when he goes about to attack their credit, so much at the expence of his own. I wonder how the world would regard that man, who should pretend to discredit *Tacitus* and *Suetonius* by such wise observations, *Tacitus* relates, that some soldiers dispatched themselves *hard by Otho's* funeral pile ; but *Suetonius* says, this happened *not far from the pile* !

With the same degree of good sense does the Gentleman object to the time of this appearance of *Jesus*. St. *Mattbew* indeed says, that, as the women were going to the Disciples, to deliver the message they had received from the Angel, *Jesus* appeared to them ; and this, he would have us believe, is contradictory to St. *John's* account, from whom we learn, that after the women had been with the Disciples, and had informed them of what they had discovered at the sepulchre, and had again returned to the sepulchre, *Jesus* appeared to them. Thus, according to *John*, the women were twice at the sepulchre. At their first visit, they found not the body of *Jesus*, and they came and told it to the Disciples : But, returning again to the sepulchre, at this second visit, they saw *Jesus*. Now, as *Mattbew* takes no notice of this circumstance of the women's having been twice at the sepulchre, but, having brought them to the sepulchre, represents them to have seen *Jesus* before they left it : What is there in any one of the rules of fair dealing or judging impartially, that can hinder us from determining, that *Mattbew* here relates what happened at the second visit the women made to the sepulchre ? To find out one single word in *John's* relation of this second visit,

visit, contradictory to that of *Mattbew*, is not in the power of our Philosopher. But, as the difficulty, I may say the impossibility, of settling, in most instances, the precise order and succession of events or circumstances, as they actually happened, leaves people at great liberty (without hurting the truth of the things themselves) in apprehending their series and connection ; if one should rather chuse to take this passage of St. *Mattbew* in another light, one may well affirm, that this Evangelist here mixes together what passed at those two visits the women made to the sepulchre, without distinguishing the one from the other, and represents the whole as transacted at the same time. And, taking it in this view ; if we compare with it the account we have from St. *John*, who makes each of those visits a distinct, separate article, and expressly declares, that *Jesuſ* appeared to the women at their second visit ; it must be conceived, that what St. *Mattbew* relates from ver. 9, happened at the second visit, and what goes before, at the first. It is true, our Philosopher may here object, that St. *Mattbew* connects all the parts of his story so very straitly, that one can suspect no interruption in the succession of those different events : The Angel's charge to the women to go tell his Disciples, that *Jesuſ* is risen : The women run to bring his Disciples word : And, as they went to tell his Disciples, behold, *Jesuſ* met them. Here, I say, the appearance of an uninterrupted succession of events is very strong. But, I am apt to think, that no man that understands history, or attends to the manner of connecting events used by Historians, will take upon him immediately to declare, that betwixt the women's being in their way, in obedience to the Angel, to tell the Disciples, that *Jesuſ* was risen, and their seeing *Jesuſ* himself, there were no intervening

intervening events ; for St. Matthew mentions none. But, if other events did actually intervene, such as their delivering their message to the Disciples, and their returning again to the sepulchre, does not St. Matthew, by his way of representing things, directly lead us into a mistake, or to form a wrong judgment as to the order and succession of events ? No ; St. Matthew writes his history, as other Historians do theirs. It is our own ignorance or want of attention, it is our being over rash or hasty in our conclusions, that betrays us. *Xiphilinus* tells us, that *Otho* having prevailed with his friends to leave him, and provide for their own safety, he withdrew into his chamber, and there run himself through with a dagger. Thus, we know of no event that intervened between *Otho*'s retiring into his chamber, and his dispatching himself ; but the one seems here to have immediately succeeded to the other. We learn, however, from *Suetonius*, that a good many events intervened, and some of them of such a nature, as made *Otho* delay dispatching himself till next morning. *Tacitus* too takes notice of several intermediate events, and particularly insinuates, what is not mentioned by *Suetonius*, that *Otho* did not dispatch himself, till he had returned to his apartment a second time. Thus, we see how very rash it would be in any man, positively to determine, that no particular facts, or only such particular facts, did intervene between two such events. *Xiphilinus* mentions none. But *Tacitus* relates several, and particularly insinuates, that *Otho* did not make himself away, at his first withdrawing into his chamber, but after he had returned to it a second time. Whereas *Suetonius* so connects the parts of his story, as to lead us to apprehend, that *Otho* dispatched himself, at his first withdrawing. Just after the same

same manner, St. John informs us, that the women did not see Jesus at their first visit to the sepulchre, but after they had returned to it a second time. Whereas St. Matthew, neglecting some intermediate events, so connects the parts of his story, as we are led to apprehend (without any the least prejudice to the main history) that the women saw Jesus, at their first visit to the sepulchre. And, if this different manner of connecting events, observed by Xiphilinus or Dio, by Tacitus and Suetonius, does, in no degree, invalidate the credit of these Historians universally regarded; I would fain hope, that the character of the Evangelical Writers, can as little suffer, upon their taking the same liberty. As we claim nothing in behalf of the Authors of the New Testament, but what is universally allowed to every other Historian, it seems scandalously partial in our Philosopher, to deny them the common rights of mankind.

It is next objected, "The witnesses do not agree, whether Jesus was held by the feet, or whether he would not suffer himself to be touched. For, St. Matthew says, the Marys held Jesus by the feet: Whereas, St. John says, Jesus forbade Mary to touch him." But this objection is founded upon our Philosopher's imposing a particular meaning upon words, as it may serve his purpose. No doubt, the word *παίσθαι*, sometimes signifies barely to touch, as it is understood, Matb. xiv. 36. *That they might only touch the hem of his garment.* But, most frequently, it signifies some inward affections or dispositions of the mind, with the corresponding, external actions of the body. And those affections with their correspondent actions, are sometimes malicious and hostile, and sometimes friendly and beneficent. Thus, Zech. ii. 8. *He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye:* i.e. He that exerts any malicious.

ous passions to your prejudice, hurts the apple of his eye. And *Mark x. 13. And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them : i. e. That with tender affections he should embrace and bless them.* Accordingly, *Jesus took them up in his arms, put his bands upon them, and blessed them.* Thus likewise, the woman, mentioned by *St. Luke, vii. 38, 39. Her washing Jesus's feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head, her kissing them, and anointing them ;* all these expressions of tender affections and deep reverence towards *Jesus*, the Pharisee, with whom our Lord was eating, comprehends under the word *ἀπλοβαι* to touch : *This man, says he within himself, if he were a Prophet, would have known, who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him ; i. e. who is thus caressing him.* Now, in this last sense, is the phrase, *μη με ἀφίξ, touch me not,* to be understood. So that the meaning is, *Embrace me not with all this fondness and tenderness ; for I am not yet ascended to my Father, and you shall have other opportunities of thus expressing your regard towards me.* As therefore *Matthew* represents to us the manner in which the women were exerting their kind affections towards *Jesus*, *holding him by the feet, and worshipping him ;* so *John* only informs us, that *Jesus* was pleased to check them in the height of their joy and tenderness, while they were thus embracing his feet ; chusing rather to hasten them away to acquaint his Disciples of his resurrection. And, had the Gentleman's scheme suffered him to understand this word, *ἀπλοβαι*, as it is commonly understood by the best Greek Authors, he would have esteemed this objection no great credit to his philosophy.

Nor is his fourth objection less trifling or frivolous. He tells us, “ The witnesses do not agree,
“ whether

" whether Jesus sent word to his Disciples, that he
" was going to Galilee, or going to heaven. For
" St. Matthew says, that Jesus bade the Marys tell
" the Disciples, he was going to Galilee: Whereas
" St. John says, that Jesus bade Mary tell the Dis-
" ciples, he was going to his Father." And why
may not these be different parts of the same message?
The Gentleman's Philosophy is not able to shew the
one inconsistent with the other. And, I hope, no
Historian is bound to relate every article and every
passage that happens. The blessed Jesus, before his
eruption, had told his Disciples, not only that af-
ter his resurrection, he would go before them into
Galilee, but, that he was likewise to go to the Fa-
ther. *I came, says our Lord, forth from the Father, and am come into the world: Again, I leave the world, and go to the Father (p).* When, therefore, he was
risen from the dead, this was the message he sent by
the women to his Disciples; *Go, says he, and tell my brethren, I am thus far in my way to ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.*
But, before I ascend, let them go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. And, as St. John and St. Matthew
do only report, one the former, and the other the
latter part of this message; surely, that man does
but shame philosophy, who takes upon him to af-
firm, here the witnesses disagree, and contradict one
another.

After these objections, our Philosopher shews his
talent in proposing more questions, than a wise man
will undertake to answer. " If Jesus (says he) and
" the Angels, or Angel, were at the sepulchre as well
" after as before Peter and John were there, why
" then did they withdraw upon their coming,
" &c.?" In general, I shall only observe, that the

Apostles being designed witnesses to the world of the resurrection of *Jesus*, it seems highly proper, that in order to prepare them for a thorough, rational conviction of the certainty of this event, they should have no visions or apparitions, that might alarm their passions and disturb their thoughts, (if possible to prevent it) but have their minds kept always quiet and composed, fully masters of themselves, and capable of examining every circumstance freely and without prejudice. This, I apprehend, might be the reason, why the Angels did not appear to *Peter* and *John* at the sepulchre, and why the women were employed to give the first warning to the Apostles concerning this event; whereby they might be put upon their guard, and prepare themselves strictly to examine into the truth of the matter, when *Jesus* himself should appear to them; which was the disposition that St. *Thomas* conceived, upon his hearing from the other Apostles, that they had seen *Jesus*; he was determined not to believe without the most incontestible evidence that his own senses could procure him. All this seems quite consistent with true philosophy. And I clearly foresee, that had the ground of our Philosopher's objection been out of the way, and the Angels appeared to the two Disciples at the sepulchre, neither would this have satisfied him: I doubt, it would have afforded him other sort of objections, that might have appeared a little more threatening. Mean while, as the case now stands, I am able to see nothing that can hinder our Philosopher from admitting the account I have presumed to give of the withdrawing of the Angels, but that it may appear to him a little too rational. For, alas! neither common sense nor common language must have leave to protect the Gospel-Historians: These are fences too weak to stop.

stop this moral Philosopher in his unbridled course to ruin their character.

He complains, "There is as little harmony among the witnesses about the Angels at the sepulchre, as there is among them about the appearances of Jesus. For St. Matthew mentions only one Angel; St. Mark calls him a young man; St. Luke says two men; but the women called them Angels; St. John calls them two Angels (q)." And will not common language justify any Historian in using these terms promiscuously? If a man knows not thus much, he has set up too soon to instruct mankind. Nor, as to the different accounts with respect to the number of those Angels, do these Historians take any other freedom, but what is used by all other Historians. Matthew and Mark mention only one Angel; and Luke and John mention two. Thus, in relating who gathered up the relics of *Augustus*, Suetonius mentions only the Roman Knights; and Dio mentions *Livia* along with them. In short, when Historians, without swerving from truth, or hurting the main history, are pleased to report, some more, and some fewer circumstances, it is unreasonable to find fault with them, but ridiculous to charge them with contradictions.

Upon this article, I have only further to add: The Gentleman's observation concerning the incredulity of the Apostles, in relation to the report of the women, may well lead us into a persuasion of the honesty of the Apostles, that they had no bias in favour of the resurrection, and were not disposed to believe it upon hear-say evidence; but, how it can tend to satisfy us, as our Philosopher would have it, that the report of the women was altogether false, is beyond my comprehension. But his reasoning

(q) P. 41, 42.

ing is no worse than his honesty. Not to observe, that he very well knows, that the Disciples came afterwards to rest fully assured of the truth of the women's report ; here he meanly imposes upon his Reader, in telling him only, "The Disciples confess, that *Mary* herself did not know whether it was *Jesus* or the Gardener (*r*)."
It is true, the Historian relates, that *Mary*, having no suspicion of the resurrection, supposed *Jesus*, when she saw him, to be the Gardener : But, does he not immediately inform us, she soon became sensible of her mistake, and knew him to be *Jesus*? And what hurt it would have done to our Philosopher's argument, or what blemish it would have cast upon the Gentleman's honesty, to have told the Reader thus much, the world will determine. I leave it to himself to declare, what that moral Philosopher is intitled to, who, under that character, setting up to teach and direct the Public, takes the opportunity to disguise things, and to mislead mankind.

The next article in order, is the appearance of *Jesus* to the two Disciples going to *Emmaus* ; which is his second appearance. And a beautiful account of this piece of history is given us by St. *Luke* xxiv. 13. which cannot but approve itself to every man of taste and judgment.

As to the names of these two Disciples ; one of them, we are told by St. *Luke*, was called *Cleopas* ; but, as he names not the other, it is not a little entertaining to find the Gentleman taking upon him to inform the world, his name was *Simon*, nay *Simon Peter* ; and upon this falling into one of his fits of wonder, which goes off as contemptibly, in a little picce of ludicrous wit. One easily perceives what has thrown our Philosopher into this blunder.

And

(*r*) P. 42.

And most certainly, some mysterious powet had spoiled his eye-sight, that he should not see the common construction of words, so very obvious to any school-boy.

But, whatever were their names, (if I may be allowed to conjecture, probably the Disciple not named was *Luke* himself; who, as a Physician, might have been called thither.) Certain it is, that these two Disciples did, for some time, walk and converse with *Jesus*, without knowing it was he, till they came to the village of *Emmaus*. And our Philosopher will give me leave to think, that the reason assigned for their not knowing him is just, and may well satisfy any Philosopher whatsoever. St. *Mark* tells us, that *he appeared to them in another form*. What that particular form was, no man, I suppose, will pretend to determine. Only, in general, one may say, his outward form or dress, or the circumstances he was in, as to his outward appearance, were such, so different from what he used to be in among his Disciples, that nothing about him could immediately raise in one's mind the particular idea of *Jesus*. Now, the blessed *Jesus* in this other dress or form, in which none of his followers had ever seen him, coming up with the two Disciples in their way to *Emmaus*; is it any thing strange or improbable, that they should not know him? Indeed, upon strict examination, or their persisting in a narrow, curious view, they might, I doubt not, have come to distinguish who he was; but, as the first sight they had of him bore no resemblance to the person of *Jesus*; and as they had been eye-witnesses of his crucifixion and death, upon which they had given him up for lost, without all hopes of his returning to life again; it is unimaginable to me, how it was possible for them to conceive any
the

the least suspicion, that the person who had joined them was *Jesus*. As naturally therefore, as the effect follows the cause, *their eyes were holden*, as St. Luke expresses it, *that they should not know him*, or their eyes were hindered from perceiving who he was. Nor needs any thing of this nature surprise the Gentleman; he is himself a standing instance, how far an ingrained prejudice against Christianity can blind a man's eyes, that he shall not be able to see a plain visible object, the common construction of language. Thus, I say, the two Disciples going to *Emmaus*, were very naturally, I may say necessarily, prevented from apprehending, that the person, who had come up with them, was *Jesus*. And as the conversation in which they engaged was so very concerning, that it could not but engross all their thoughts, as we find it did; and as *Jesus*, in explaining his own character, and particularly that it behoved *Christ* to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, gave no hint that he was the person, it is natural to imagine, that the impression they had received from the first sight of this stranger, must still remain, and they continue ignorant who he was. Accordingly they are still void of all suspicion in whose company they were, till they went into the house, and were set down to meat; and then it came to pass, as *Jesus* sat at meat with them, *he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them, and their eyes were opened, and they knew him*. O transporting glorious sight!

— The import of this history is briefly this:

According to the prejudices of the Jewish nation, these two Disciples were, no doubt, possessed with the certain prospect of a temporal kingdom that should never fail under the endless reign of their *Messiah*. It was this that rendered them quite irreconcileable to the thoughts of the crucifixion, and altogether

altogether incapable of the hopes of the resurrection. In order, therefore, to relieve them of those mistaken notions, and to prepare them for the discovery he was about to make, the blessed *Jesus*, beginning at *Moses*, and all the Prophets, expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself ; in particular, that *Christ* or the *Messiah* ought to have suffered these things, which had befallen *Jesus of Nazareth*, that he ought to rise again from the dead, then ascend into heaven, and there enter into his glory, the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. Such were the instructions with which *Jesus* entertained the two Disciples, in their way to *Emmaus*; and by such instructions they were fully reconciled to the true character of the *Messiah*, all their prejudices against his sufferings, his death and passion, were removed, and their hearts were warmed with the glowing hopes of his resurrection, or of their seeing him again alive. *Did not our heart (say they) burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?* Now, in this situation of mind, the two Disciples sat down at table, and being thus prepared, without any distraction of thought, to discern who he was ; with his own proper air and address, and in his usual form of words and expressions, *he took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to them.* Upon this action of our Saviour, the two Disciples immediately struck with the idea of *Jesus*, their attention is roused, they fix their eyes, they survey the person of this stranger, they see and know him to be *Jesus*. And thus *their eyes were opened and they knew him*. Nor is it to be doubted but *Jesus* discovered himself without reserve, and left them fully satisfied. This, in my apprehension, is an easy and natural account of this appearance.

appearance of Jesus, which stands to reason and philosophy.

I confess, that from the manner, wherein St. Luke seems to tell us, this appearance was concluded; one may be apt to think, that Jesus was no sooner known to these two Disciples, than he vanished out of their sight, or (which I take to be the true meaning of this phrase (*s*) ἀφαντος ἐγένετο) than he withdrew from them unexpectedly; which might lead one to apprehend, that their knowledge of him could be but slight, and not very certain. But here it is to be remarked, as I have before observed, that an Historian's barely connecting one thing immediately with another, can be held no sort of proof, that betwixt these two events, there was no intermediate ones: But, in order to understand whether any events did actually intervene, we must consult the parallel places of the same or other Historians, or consider the nature and circumstances of things. When, therefore, one would satisfy one's self, whether, betwixt the first discovery the two Disciples had of Jesus, and his withdrawing himself, there were any intermediate events; as there is no parallel place of any Historian to assist us, one can only here consider the nature and circumstances of things. Let it then be observed, there is in this passage nothing that can determine us to think, that so soon as the Disciples came to discern, who he was, Jesus withdrew and disappeared. Indeed, had the Historian expressly said, that the Disciples had but a glimpse

(1) The Scholiast upon Euripides explains ἀφαντος ἐγένετο, by ἀφανης ἐγένετο, which, in Josephus, signifies to make one's escape, or to get out of sight. *diaphanat in rha maxnt apafnc eyereto*. Antiq. l. 20. c. 8. § 6. So that to understand by this phrase, the vanishing into air, like what they call a spectre, is childish.

of *Jesus*, or that the moment they saw it was *Jesus*, he suddenly got away or retired from them; this might have put an end to the question. But, as St. Luke only relates the main events, and connects them in such manner as not to exclude any intermediate ones, (*and their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he unexpectedly withdrew from them,*) it would be quite as rash to pronounce from this passage of St. Luke, that betwixt their knowing *Jesus*, and his withdrawing from them, there were no intervening events; as it would be from the fore-cited passage of *Xiphilinus* “ (when he had thus said, “ he retired into his chamber, and run himself “ through;) ” to declare, that betwixt *Otbo’s* withdrawing, and his killing himself, there was no one event that happened. Besides, as it was certainly the design of *Jesus* to make himself known to these two Disciples; and as, for this purpose, he was at pains to explain to them the Scriptures, particularly, that it behoved *Christ* to suffer death, and to rise again from the dead; meaning thereby to prevent their being seized with any confusion of thought, any dread or hurry of passion, and to secure a composure of mind fit to examinethings without prejudice, when he should come to discover himself: As this, I say, was the design of *Jesus*, and these were the means he employed to make it effectual, no man can imagine, that, upon the first sight the Disciples had of him, he immediately withdrew out of their sight; but that he continued with them for some time, (perhaps, till their repast was ended) and put it in their power to satisfy themselves fully as to the reality of his person; which is manifestly the case in all his other appearances. Again, as these two Disciples were certainly in the same situation of mind with the rest of their bre-

thren, under no bias to hope or wish for the resurrection, but so strongly prejudiced against it, that they judged it an event absurd and incredible, so incredible that no one would rely on another's evidence; it cannot be imagined that men of such dispositions, would rest themselves satisfied, that the person, who, upon their getting but a slight view of him, had immediately disappeared, was no other but *Jesus*. And therefore, as we are told by St. *Luke*, that these two Disciples *ἐπέγνωσαν* knew him to be *Jesus*; or, as St. *Mark* has it, that *Jesus ἐφανερώθη*, was made known or manifest unto them; it must be allowed, that they had more than a bare glance; that they were freely admitted to examine his body, in such a manner as could not but afford them full satisfaction.

Thus, from considering the nature and circumstances of things, one is necessarily led to conclude, that betwixt the first sight these two Disciples had of *Jesus*, and his withdrawing from them, several events must have interveened, that brought them to the certain knowledge of his being *Jesus*. And as no man, so far as I am able to judge, that deserves the name of a Philosopher, can possibly avoid this conclusion; let the Gentleman recollect with what justness and decency he has proposed so many silly ludicrous reflections and questions. There is indeed one question abundantly proper, “ Can a “ ny good reason (says he) be given, why *Jesus* “ did not discover himself to them by the way (*t*)?” And why *Jesus* did not thus discover himself, I have, methinks, given a very good reason; such a reason as may teach our Philosopher, that the appearances of *Jesus* are chargeable with neither imposture nor enthusiasm.

Our

(t) P. 44.

Our Philosopher leads us next to consider the third appearance of *Jesus*, which was to all his Apostles. And he tells us, that "the evidence of this appearance of *Jesus* to the Apostles, on which the faith of the world is to rest, is worthy our regard. St. *Matthew* (says he) St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke* agree, that when the Disciples were made acquainted with the resurrection of *Jesus*, they met him for the first and last time. But this St. *John*, the Author of the *Acts*, and St. *Paul* contradict; for they tell us of other appearances afterwards.—And even, as to this last appearance of *Jesus*, St. *Matthew* disagrees with St. *Luke*, both as to time and place; for, while St. *Luke* makes it to have been at *Jerusalem*, on the evening of the day of the resurrection, St. *Matthew* says, it was at a mountain in *Galilee*, where *Jesus* had appointed them; therefore the Disciples could not be there on the evening of the day he arose (*u*)."

These are the Gentleman's objections. And one could have wished he had condescended to declare the particular reasons that induced him to assure the world, that *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke*, do all of them mention the first and last, or the only appearance that *Jesus* made to his Apostles. Indeed, our Philosopher, by his great skill in Geography, proves an article that never was debated, namely, that the appearance mentioned by *Matthew* differs, as to time and place, from that mentioned by *Luke*. But what evidence has he, that these two Historians do each of them mean the first and last appearance of *Jesus*, and are therefore contradictory the one to the other? In my apprehension, a very moderate degree of philosophy will teach a man, that the appearance

pearance mentioned by *Matthew* cannot possibly be understood to be the first and last, or the only appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles.

During the life of *Jesus*, as the Disciples were by no means able to comprehend the meaning of his rising again from the dead; so after his death, so far were they beyond all hopes of his resurrection, that they gave him up for quite lost, and judged the whole design he had formed absolutely ruined: So irrecoverably, in their opinion, was *Jesus* lost, and his design ruined, that when the event of his resurrection came to be reported, no one of them would admit the truth of it, but upon the testimony of his own proper senses. Now, let a Philosopher consider the nature and circumstances of things, it seems to me impossible how he can conceive any the least suspicion, that those men, who had seen *Jesus* crucified at *Jerusalem*, and all their hopes buried with him, should go from thence to a mountain in *Galilee*, in order to meet with him whom they never expected to see in life again. Nothing can be more manifest, than that before they could undertake such a journey, upon such an errand, they must have been fully satisfied as to the certain truth of the resurrection; nay, they must have seen *Jesus* himself, every man with his own eyes. Accordingly, in this very passage of St. *Matthew*, it is fairly insinuated, or rather necessarily implied, that *Jesus* had formerly appeared to his Disciples, and satisfied them as to the truth of his resurrection; for otherwise how could they receive *an appointment from Jesus*, and, in consequence of this appointment, leave *Jerusalem*, and go to meet with him upon a particular mountain in *Galilee*? Our Philosopher therefore only shews the world; how little he deserves that character; when he tells them, that this appearance mentioned

mentioned by St. Matthew is the first and last, or the only appearance that Jesus made to his Disciples.

As for the Evangelist *Mark*, he likewise, as well as St. Matthew, particularly reports, that the women had received a message to be delivered to the Apostles, letting them know, that *Jesus goeth*, i. e. *is to go*, (not *was gone*, as by a poor shift our upright Philosopher would help a desperate cause (x)) before them into *Galilee*; and that there they should see him. Here, then, there is a plain intimation of a meeting which *Jesus* was to have with his Disciples in *Galilee*. And, no doubt, the women delivered their message. But, as I have just now explained from the nature of things, that the Apostles, without seeing *Jesus* with their own eyes, could not conceive a thought of going to *Galilee*, upon any prospect of their meeting him; so the same reasoning is here equally conclusive: And St. *Mark* further confirms it in reporting, that when *Mary Magdalene* told the Disciples that *Jesus* had appeared to her, *they believed not*, they did not believe that *Jesus* had risen from the dead, and that she had seen him. And surely no man can imagine, that the Apostles went to meet a person in *Galilee*, of whom they thought he was still lying dead at *Jerusalem*. Of necessity, therefore, before they could have a thought of going to *Galilee*, they must have seen *Jesus* alive, and been absolutely assured of his resurrection. Accordingly, St. *Mark* informs us, that *Jesus appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief, and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen* (y). And, from the circumstances of this appearance, nothing can be more manifest,

(x) P. 54.

(y) *Mark* xvi. 14.

manifest, than that it is the first appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles, or that they had not seen him before, but only heard of his resurrection by report from others. Nor does our Philosopher herein disagree with us; only he takes upon him to alledge, that as this was the first appearance, so it was the last and the only one that *Jesus* made to his Apostles. But where, does our Philosopher think, did this appearance happen? Why, he tells us, " If " St. *Mark* means *Galilee*, he contradicts St. *Luke*: " If he means *Jerusalem*, he contradicts himself; " for he says, *the Angel or young man told them Jesus was gone before the Disciples into Galilee, and there they should see him (z).*" A most unhappy situation this! St. *Mark* must either contradict St. *Luke*, or contradict himself. 'Tis agreed, however, that according to St. *Mark*, *Jesus* must have met his Disciples in *Galilee*. But (setting aside our Philosopher's unfair scandalous *was gone*) what is the circumstance in this appearance here related by St. *Mark*, that can afford any man the least hint, that it happened in *Galilee*? Till the moment of this appearance, the Apostles had given no credit to the reports of those other Disciples who had seen *Jesus* after he had risen, but continued hardened in their hearts and obstinate unbelievers. And can such men be thought to have undertaken a journey to *Galilee*, in hopes of there seeing *Jesus*? Impossible. No proposition in *Euclid* can be more certain, than that the Apostles could not stir from *Jerusalem*, upon any prospect of their any-where meeting with *Jesus*. This appearance, therefore, did most certainly happen at *Jerusalem*. And therein St. *Mark* agrees with St. *Luke*, as well as St. *John* does, who,

(z) P. 54.

who, by the circumstances, as our Philosopher allows, makes the first appearance of *Jesus* to be at *Jerusalem*, tho' he does not mention the place (*a*). So that with respect to the place of this appearance, St. *Mark* does no ways contradict St. *Luke*; and far less can he be understood to contradict himself. It is true, the appearance which here he mentions, is, beyond all question, the first appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles; but he gives not the least hint, that it is likewise his last, or his only appearance; on the contrary, he intimates that another appearance was to happen in *Galilee*, which our Philosopher seems to think, could not but happen, and which is that particular appearance recorded by St. *Mattbew*.

Thus far, therefore, our Philosopher will give me leave to say, I have demonstrated, that the appearance mentioned by St. *Mattbew*, cannot possibly be the first, but that another, without controversy, must have happened before it: And that the appearance mentioned by St. *Mark*, is indeed the first, but cannot possibly be last; for that another appearance, as it was intimated, must have happened in *Galilee*. So that we have only now to consider the case of St. *Luke*.

And, to be sure, this Evangelist mentions only one appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles, without giving us any intimation of another: Nor is it to be questioned, but this is the first appearance; before which, the Apostles were only alarmed, as he observes, with the reports of other people. But does St. *Luke* expressly say, or but darkly hint, or at any distance insinuate, that this was the first and last, or the only appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles? This no other man can affirm. How then comes

(*a*) P. 48.

comes our Philosopher thus to distinguish himself, and so avowedly to publish to the world, that St. Luke makes this appearance of Jesus the last and the only one to his Apostles? I have already said, that St. Luke mentions only one appearance, and is quite silent as to any other. But, whilst St. Luke openly asserts the truth of the main history, I mean that of the resurrection, and gives us a plain proof or instance of it in this one appearance of Jesus to his Apostles (without mentioning that to the two Disciples;) of what consequence can any mortal man think it, that he is barely silent as to any other instance or appearance, which here may be considered only as a circumstance? For an Historian having given us what he apprehends a plain instance, or a sufficient proof of the fact or event he relates, all other further proofs or instances he may regard as circumstances not necessary to be reported. So far, in my apprehension, is St. Luke's silence in this matter, from being any thing of a proof, that there was no other appearance, or that he believed and knew of no other; that any thing of a Philosopher would be ashamed to propose it even as a colour of suspicion. And let the Gentleman tell us what other reason he can pretend for his presuming to assure mankind, St. Luke says, that Jesus was with his Apostles only one day, and ascended on the evening of the resurrection day (b). By the universal consent of all antiquity, St. Luke is held to be the Author of the *Acts* of the Apostles: And there he expressly declares, that to his Apostles Jesus shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days. Indeed our Philosopher is pleased to deny, that St. Luke is the Author of the *Acts* of the Apostles. And, for this opinion, whatever may be his private reasons, this is the only one he makes public;

(b) P. 48.

public; "The Author of the *Acts* says, that Jesus
"was with the Apostles forty days, St. Luke only
"one day. Now, could this Author be St. Luke,
"who so contradicts St. Luke (c)." Why, truly,
at this rate of explaining history, and finding out
contradictions, and thereby proving a book is spuri-
ous, I do believe, one may undertake to prove,
there is hardly a history in the world that can be
held authentic, or to be writ by the person whose
name it bears. If one shall insinuate to prove either
the history or the Annals of *Tacitus* to be spurious,
the Gentleman's argument will serve effectually.
Let us take the history, and our Philosopher's rea-
soning is thus: The Author of this history says,
"That *Cratismandua* having seized *Carattacus* by
"guile, delivered him to the *Romans*; but denies
"that *Carattacus* had recourse to the faith and pro-
tection of that Queen, and that she delivered him
"in bonds to the conquerors (d)." *Tacitus*, in his
his Annals, says, "That *Cratismandua* did not seize
"*Carattacus* by treachery; but that he had recourse
"to her faith and protection, and she delivered him
"in bonds to the conquerors (e)." Now, could
this Author be *Tacitus* who so contradicts *Tacitus*?

But, not to disturb the Gentleman in his conceit,
about the Author of the *Acts* of the Apostles, I shall
not here insist upon this passage of the *Acts*. It is
fully sufficient to say, that St. Luke's mentioning in
his Gospel only one appearance of Jesus to his A-
postles, and his being silent as to any other, is not
so much as the shadow of a proof, that this is the
first and last, or the only appearance of Jesus, or
that St. Luke knew of no other. And I am sorry to
observe, that our moral Philosopher goes beyond the

bounds of all honesty; in telling the world that St. Luke says, Jesus *ascended on the evening of the resurrection day, and was only one day* (he should have said, a few moments) *with the Apostles*. Such an imposition upon St. Luke, and upon mankind, is so unworthy a Gentleman, so unbecoming even a pretender to fair dealing, that one cannot but be greatly concerned, there are such characters in the world, especially among those who set up to lead or instruct mankind. It is true, that, beginning at this first appearance of Jesus, St. Luke goes on, without interruption, in a continued narration, till he comes to relate the ascension; so that these two events do here seem to be immediately connected together. But, as I have already frequently observed, no man that understands history can take upon him to affirm, that betwixt these two particular events, there were no other events intervening. This must be determined from the nature and circumstances of things, and from the accounts of other Historians. And here, in attending to the nature and circumstances of things, it appears, in any sense, beyond credibility, that this was the appearance at which Jesus ascended. And do not all the other Gospel-historians, not excepting St. Matthew and St. Mark, give us to understand, that, betwixt the first appearance of Jesus to the Apostles, and his ascension, there were several appearances that interveened? But this I shall have occasion further to explain, when I come to consider our Philosopher's objections, with respect to the history of the ascension.

Upon the whole, it is apparent, that although Matthew, Mark, and Luke, do each of them relate only one appearance; yet no one of them can at any rate be understood to mean the first and last, or the only appearance of Jesus to his Apostles: And consequently, that, with respect to the appearances of Jesus,

Jesus, they are in no degree contradicted by the other New Testament Writers, who mention more appearances than one. Our Philosopher's reasoning, in going about to show the Gospel-historians involved in contradictions, would confound all history. *Livy* reports, that *Scipio Africanus* was saluted King by the *Spaniards*, for the first and last time, after the battle of *Betula* (f): But *Polybius* tells us, that both before and after that battle, he was saluted King several times (g). But after this manner, (which is the very manner, wherein our Philosopher is pleased to treat the Gospel-historians) to go about to prove, that *Livy* and *Polybius* contradict one another, would be judged contemptible trifling, or rather shew a man smitten with lunacy. And indeed, our Philosopher's passion, to have the Gospel-historians to contradict one another, is a great deal too extravagant, and betrays itself too openly. He tells us, that as to (what he calls) this last, or only appearance of *Jesus*, " St. *Matthew* disagrees with St. *Luke*, both as to time and place; for St. *Matthew* says, it was at a mountain in *Galilee*, where *Jesus* had appointed them; and St. *Luke* says, it was at *Jerusalem*, on the evening of the day of the resurrection (b)." But, as neither of these Historians say, or at any distance seem to say, that *Jesus*, after his resurrection, appeared only once to his Apostles; and the Gentleman's sagacity has enabled him to discern, that the appearance which St. *Matthew* mentions is different, both as to time and place, from that mentioned by St. *Luke*, might not his honesty have disposed him to acknowledge, that from hence the conclusion is, these are certainly two different appearances; two ap-

(f) *Liv.* lib. 27. § 21.
(b) P. 47, 48.

(g) *Polyb.* lib. 10. § 35, 37.

pearances so consistent with one another, that, as I have above observed from the nature of things, the appearance in *Galilee*, mentioned by St. *Mattew*, could not possibly have had a being, unless that at *Jerusalem*, mentioned by St. *Luke*, had first happened? This, doubtless, is the natural consequence; only the bounds of nature are not able to contain a man acted by a furious lawless spirit of infidelity. I am confident, that no Christian will decline having the Gospel-history examined according to the strictest rules of criticism and philosophy; and to this trial it has been often put. But it seems hard to suffer a man, in using the Gospel-historians in a manner, for which he would be held unsufferable in the case of any other Historians. As it may be well expected in a rational institution, the gospel of *Christ* is against all persecution, and *every one that nameth the name of Christ* ought to abhor it. But this cannot hinder me from thinking, the *Republic of Letters* ought to disown this Gentleman, and to declare, he is no Philosopher, far less a moral Philosopher; he bears not the least regard to the nature and relations of things.

In the conclusion of this article, our Philosopher entertains us with some very curious and learned remarks, beginning with St. *Thomas*'s conduct, as to his belief of the resurrection.

1st, "St. *Thomas*'s infidelity and faith were very extraordinary. He would not believe that *Jesus* was risen from the dead, except he saw and felt the wounds that caused his death (i)." This our Philosopher judges highly unreasonable; and apprehends, that his Disciples might have satisfied themselves with less. "Was not *Jesus* (says he) to be known without those wounds, or the prints or scars of them, by his own Disciples? Had they forgot

(i) P. 49.

“ forgot the idea of his person, and the sound of his voice in so short a time ? ” Upon such evidence, I confess, the Disciples ought, in reason, to have believed the resurrection. But, the Gentleman, I hope, upon second thoughts, will not be so forward in condemning St. Thomas for being so much upon his guard, or so very cautious in admitting the truth of an event so very extraordinary. It shews, at least, the firmness and honesty of the man, and that he was not to be led away by any cheat or impostor. Nor can I much approve of our Philosopher’s ridiculing St. Thomas’s demand of that particular instance of sensible demonstration. Homer seems to lay great stress upon such a proof in the case of *Ulysses*, without suspecting it liable to ridicule, or to this wise objection ; “ if these marks were only prints or scars of wounds in his hands and side, could not another person, who might have a mind to deceive, make scars in those places, or the appearance of such wounds ? ” *Euryklea* had not forgot the idea of *Ulysses*’s person, and the sound of his voice.

Αλλ’ οὐπώ τινά φημι ἐσικότα ωδεὶς ιδέσθαι.
Ω; σύ δέμας, φωνήν τε, πόδας τ’ Οδυσσῆι ἔστιν.

Odyss. xix.

But, when she came to discover the scar of the wound in his thigh, she then immediately knew he was *Ulysses* ; and was fully satisfied as to the identity of his real person :

αυτίκα δὲ εγνω
Οὐλὴν τὴν ποτέ μη σὺς ἥκασε λευκῷ ὁδόντι.

Η μάλ’ Οδυσσέους ἔστι, φίλον τέκος. —

Ibid.

This

This scar *Homer* always calls an incontestible proof. As such *Ulysses* shews it, when his father *Laertes* demanded some undeniable evidence of his being his son *Ulysses*: And, to convince them beyond doubt, he shews it to *Eumeus* and *Pbiletas*, two old servants of the family.

Haying so far mentioned this passage of *Homer*, I cannot but observe further: Although *Euryklea's* discovery of *Ulysses* happened in the presence of *Penelope*, and was attended with such circumstances as might have engaged her attention, and led her to understand that her guest was her husband; yet she came not then to discern who he was. And, I can venture to say, that the reason that *Homer* assigns, is this, *her eyes were bolden, that she should not know him*, which the Poet represents as the effect of *Minerva's* diverting her mind, or employing it otherwise:

H' δ' ετ' αἴθρησαι δυνατ' ἀντίν, ὅτε νοῆσαι
Τῇ γαρ Αἴηναιν νόον ἐτράπειν. —

Ibid.

So that one, with good reason, may alledge, *Homer* never would have blamed *Thomas's* demanding such a proof for the truth of the resurrection: Nor would he have judged the case of the two Disciples going to *Emmaus* (*their eyes were bolden, that they should not know him*) a matter of so much ridicule. But, perhaps, the Gentleman's taste of things is much more refined, and far preferable to that of *Homer's*! And, I confess, few men can be capable of propounding wiser questions than our Philosopher; “ Were these prints (says he) better to be “ known than the form of his person, which they “ had so often seen? ” By no means; otherwise, the seeing them was to little purpose. But, St. *Thomas*

Thomas might think, that after his resurrection, these prints were become necessary parts of the form of his body ; and his seeing them could not well lessen his conviction as to the identity of his Master's real person.

In his 2d Remark, our Philosopher calls in question the truth of what St. *John* reports concerning the *wound in Jesus's side*. And the only reason he goes upon, is this : “ This fact (says he) was unknown to St. *Thomas*,” (but how to St. *Thomas* ! when it is here the very fact he insists upon ?) “ and the other Apostles ; for if they did know it as well as St. *John*, why do none of them neither tell us of the fact, nor of these words that refer to it ? ” Why, really I do believe, that neither St. *John*, nor any other of the Gospel-Historians, have told us all that they knew. Each of them, no doubt, have related what they judged proper for their purpose ; and what more can any sober man expect or demand from any Historian whatsoever ? *Livy* tells us, that *Scipio*, having given orders that *Massiva* should not be sold along with the other *African* prisoners, sent him home to his uncle *Masanissa*, honoured with presents (*k*) : And afterwards informs us, that *Masanissa* in his interview with *Scipio*, assured him, that this civility towards his nephew had made him long for an opportunity of becoming an ally to the *Romans* (*l*). Now, why does *Polybius* neither tell us of the fact, (*Scipio*'s granting *Massiva* his liberty,) nor yet of those words (in *Scipio*'s interview with *Masanissa*, after the defeat of *Indibilis*,) that refer to it (*m*) ? In our Philosopher's manner of explaining history, *Polybius* must deny those events reported by *Livy*, and therein contradict

(*k*) *Liv.* lib. xxvii. § 21.

(*l*) *Id.* lib. xxviii. § 35.

(*m*) *Vid.* *Polyb.* lib. x. § 37. lib. xi. § 31.

dict him; or, to express it in the Gentleman's own language, (when he would have St. John to deny what the other Gospel-Historians report concerning Christ's fortelling his resurrection to his Disciples,) I have examined *Polybius*, and find, that he says not a word of any of those two events, *but denies them both*. This is the manner of our Philosopher. What historical truths the rest of the world might be left in possession of, under the management of this Gentleman, I am not able to foresee. But sure I am, that the professors of Christianity should not have left them one article that does not suit the cause of Infidelity.

From calling in question the soldier's wounding the body of Jesus in the side, he proceeds to propose his doubts as to the reality of his death. But the Gentleman's scruples upon this article, only shew us, that his Philosophy is of such a nature as to enable him to deny the sun is shining, whilst every body else sees all about him in brightness. His opinion is, that the conquest that seems to be obtained over Mr. Woolston, was occasioned by his granting too much; and therefore to prevent his seeming to be conquered too, he will grant nothing, nothing that does not serve the design he has formed. This is a little too manifest in the present case. The Evangelist John reports more circumstances relating to the crucifixion of Jesus, than any of the other Evangelists; and our Philosopher picking out such of those circumstances as he thinks may answer his purpose of denying the death of Christ, or rendering it doubtful, those he grants to be true; but as to the other circumstances that would infer the reality of his death, these, he apprehends, are false, and not to be admitted. " If it be doubted (says the Gentleman) whether Jesus was really dead when he was

" was put into the sepulchre, which was a cave
" hewn out of a rock ; it will be matter of less
" doubt whether he rose again ? And why he arose
" in the night ? Why his countenance was so much
" altered, that his Disciples scarce knew him but by
" his wounds ? Why he did not appear afterwards
" in public, but to his Disciples only, &c. Add to
" this, that a healthful, sober young man, with vi-
" gorous spirits, does not easily part with life, by
" wounds in the extreme parts (a)." That his
countenance was so much altered, that his Disciples
scarce knew him but by his wounds, is a plain for-
gery of our moral Philosopher : But that he return-
ed to life in the night, or towards the rising of the
sun ; and that he did not appear afterwards in pu-
blic, but to his Disciples only ; these are real matters
of fact, (to be explained in their proper place) but
wide from the mark, far from proving that *Jesus*
did not die upon the cross. I confess, indeed, that
his dying so soon, whilst the two that were cruci-
fied with him were still alive, has something in it
very extraordinary : But the Gospel-history will
enable us to account for it. Our Philosopher must
then know, that as in numberless other instances, so
particularly in this, our blessed Saviour was infinite-
ly superior to all the individuals of human race ; he
had the intire disposal of his own life, or he was en-
dowed with an inherent power to preserve his life,
or to lay it down, and to take it up again, according
as God the Father should be pleased to appoint or
command him. Therefore, says our Lord, *doth my*
Father love me, because I lay down my life for sinful
mankind, that, upon finishing their redemption, I
might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I
lay it down of myself : I have power to lay it down, and

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(a) P. 50.

I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father (p). It was not therefore the malice of the Jews, that constrained Jesus to suffer death, or that violently forced him out of life.

When the band of men, who came to apprehend him, had answered, that they were seeking Jesus of Nazareth; upon our Lord's telling them, that he was the man, *they went backward, and fell to the ground*: The effect of an invisible power, which shews us, that without his permission they could not possibly have taken him. But, without a miracle, by the darkness of the night, he might have made his escape, and conveyed himself out of their reach. Nevertheless, Jesus knowing all things that should come upon him, *went forth, and once again said unto them, whom seek ye?* And having as often told them, that he was the man, he delivered himself into their hands; only requesting that his Disciples might have their liberty: *I have told you*, says our Lord, *that I am he. If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way* (q). Wherein we still see, that the blessed Jesus disposes of his own life, and willingly yields up himself to suffer death. Nor do we find him acting another part before his Judges. Here, indeed, in general, he asserts his innocence, and avowedly claims the character he had all along assumed. But he proceeds no farther: He enters into no particular plea or apology, whereby to move his Judges either on the side of justice or of favour; nay, he plainly slighted the fair opportunity he had of disappointing the malice of the Jews his persecutors. For so thoroughly was Pilate convinced of the integrity and innocence of Jesus, and so high an opinion had he conceived of his merit, that he not only was constant

(p) Joh. x. 17, 18.

(q) Joh. xviii. 8.

stant in publicly declaring, *he found no fault in him*, and therefore argued with the *Jews* in his favour, and shewed an earnestness to prevail with them to save him ; but hearing it objected to *Jesus*, that *he made himself the Son of God*, and, in his notion of things, suspecting *he might be so* ; alarmed by this particular in his character, *he went again into the judgment-hall*, he asks *Jesus* from whence *he was*, and assures him, that as *he had power to crucify him, so he had power to release him* (r). A fair invitation to *Jesus*, one would think, to shelter himself under his authority. And had our Lord improved the opportunity, and directly thrown himself upon *Pilate's* protection, it appears to me more than probable, that *Pilate* would have exerted his power, and saved him. But, the blessed *Jesus*, slighting all advantages that could promise him safety, interposes in no degree, but suffers human passions to go on in their own course. So that in the end, *Pilate* observing that the *Jews* were violently importunate to have him put to death, and that *Jesus* himself was careless of his life, yields to the clamours of the multitude, and, with great reluctance, delivers up *Jesus* to be crucified. And do we not here likewise see, that the blessed *Jesus*, as one having the disposal of his own life, does, on purpose, resign himself to suffer the death of the cross ? A conduct not for our imitation, who have no power over our own lives ; and which the Apostle *Paul* was far from imitating. But as *Jesus* declared, *he had power to lay down his life, and power to take it again, and had received such a command of his Father* ; with this perfectly consists his not minding his own preservation, and his giving up himself to be crucified. And from the many miracles which he wrought, we may well rest assured,

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(r) Joh. xix. 7.—10.

he had a natural power to have come down from the cross, and confounded the railing of his enemies. With great truth, therefore, it may be affirmed, that whilst Jesus was able to have saved his life, and triumphed over his enemies, he willingly delivered himself into the hands of the Jews to be crucified : And upon the cross, having it still in his power to deliver himself, to retain his life, or to lay it down, he solemnly resigns it into the hands of his Father : Or, before the agonies of his body had exhausted his spirits, and put a stop to the animal functions, he willingly parted with life, and, by his own proper deed, gave himself up to death, *an offering and sacrifice to God, for the sins of the world.*

This is a consistent, natural account from the Gospel-history, how it happened that Jesus came so soon to expire upon the cross : And with this agrees the conduct of the Centurion, *and of those that were with him, watching Jesus* (s). After our Lord had hung upon the cross for the space of about six hours, *the Centurion who stood over against him, heard him cry with a loud voice, It is finished ; Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit :* And with this voice, he likewise saw him immediately *bow his head, and give up the ghost.* And, as in the opinion of the Centurion, the force and loudness of this voice did by no means shew the patient in a languishing condition, ready either to fall into a *syncope*, or totally to expire ; but of that strength and vigour of body that made a *deliquium* impossible, and would prevent death for a considerable time, and make it long and lingering ; so when, notwithstanding this, he unexpectedly saw, that upon this strong and loud voice, his giving up the ghost immediately followed ; a great surprize seized him, he was forced to suspect there was something

(s) Matth. xxvii. 54.

thing more than human in the case, and according to his Heathen notions, seems to have apprehended, that after some supernatural manner *Jesus* had left the earth, and gone up to the assembly of the Gods. *And when the Centurion which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, truly this man was the Son of God* (t). And thus what *Pilate* before only suspected, the Centurion declares is now fully confirmed, *in real truth Jesus was the Son of God*: A character which the Heathen gave to those, in whose death there appeared any particular circumstance or accessory, which they might think miraculous, or uncommonly favourable to the person deceased. So that however at this time, and in this part of the world, our moral Philosopher may incline to disbelieve the reality of the death of *Jesus* upon the cross, we are well persuaded it was no matter of doubt with the *Roman* Centurion who was present; and an eye-witness of all that was done, and whose curiosity could not but engage him carefully to examine an event, which to him appeared so very extraordinary.

It appears too, that when *Joseph* of *Arimathea* petitioned to have the body of *Jesus* given him, *Pontius Pilate* was not rash in granting the request. His conduct was natural and just: For as in the common course of things, *Pilate* had no reason to apprehend it, he was surprised at the account of his being already dead; and therefore being aware to have full information of the truth of so uncommon an event, *he called unto him the Centurion, and asked whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the Centurion, he gave the body to Joseph* (u).

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(t) *Mark xv. 39.*(u) *Mark xv. 43, &c.*

In short, as the day following the crucifixion was the Sabbath, when the bodies should not remain upon the cross ; the Jews addressed Pilate beseeching him, that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. *Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs.* And does not this yet farther convince us, that even in those circumstances wherein the death of Christ was the question, and people's conduct was to be regulated by its certainty, there is no manner of doubt concerning its reality ? So thoroughly were they convinced, that Jesus was most certainly dead, that *they brake not his legs*, whilst *they brake the legs of the other two whom they found living.* But *one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water (x).* A piece of barbarity upon the dead body of Jesus, which I am prone to think, was committed at the direction of some of the Jewish Rulers, who undoubtedly were present upon this occasion, that no means might be neglected, whereby utterly to extinguish the life of Jesus, to render the dead body, as they might think, incapable of reviving, and to cut off all hopes or pretences of a resurrection. To every man, therefore, who knows in what part of the human body blood and water are lodged, if the death of Christ was doubtful before, it must now appear a reality beyond all contradiction. So that, without a degree of ignorance or malice, that blinds or hardens the heart against rational conviction, no man can deny the death of Jesus upon the cross, foolishly pretending that the only infallible sign of death

(x) Joh. xix. 31, &c.

death is putrefaction. And indeed this sign is altogether incompatible with the character of *Jesus*, who foretold, that *he was to lay down his life of himself*, and that *on the third day he was to take it again*; and of whom it had been long before prophesied, that *God would not suffer his holy One to see corruption* (y).

These are so many circumstances relating to the death of *Christ*, which, as they stand in the history, do every one of them lead us to regard that event as most certain and undoubted. Such of them, as I before hinted, as may be consistent with our Lord's being still alive, our Philosopher is pleased to admit, namely, that *his legs were not broken to hasten and compleat his death, as the others were*; that *Joseph begged the body of Jesus from Pilate*; that *Pilate marvelled if he were already dead*; and that *he was taken down by Joseph himself* (z). But as to all the other circumstances that would put the death of our Lord beyond question, those he finds it necessary to suppress or reject: In particular he denies, that *one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side*. Where the Gentleman pickt up his philosophy, no body is concerned; but it must be of a very singular nature, if it is able to justify him in culling matters of fact after this manner, or in thus regarding and rejecting the authority of St. John, and of every other New Testament Writer, precisely as it suits the cause of Infidelity. One can have little pleasure in making such reflections; but the management is so bare-faced and open, that one cannot but observe, it is not our Philosopher's design to find out truth, but to suppress it, and in place thereof to obtrude upon the world untruths and

(y) Psal. xvi. 10. Acts ii. 27, 31. and xiij. 35, 37.

(z) P. 50.

and contradictions, that are manifestly his own forging. *The end sanctifies the means*, is a wicked maxim, justly abhorred by all sober men, and I am loth to count it among the principles of a moral Philosopher.

After all, what can those Gentlemen mean in attempting to persuade the world, that *Jesus* did not expire upon the cross? The consequence is, we must believe, that *Jesus* was alive after the crucifixion; that he appeared to his Disciples, that he conversed familiarly with them, and gave them all possible proofs of the identity of his person. Here therefore we have those moral Philosophers fairly embarked with us in supporting the evidence of what Christians call the *resurrection*. And I violently suspect, that the evidence whereby that Christian article is justified, carries in it such strength and force, that our Infidels, unable to withstand it, and conscious of the folly of all their objections, have at length cast about, and like men in despair, catched hold of this silly argument, with which they perish utterly, whilst therein they manifestly betray their own cause. In the mean while, now that we are all agreed, that *Jesus was alive after his crucifixion*, and, without doubt, the Rulers of the *Jews* came very soon to hear of it, and sadly dreaded the consequences of such an event; I could wish our moral Philosophers not to trouble them with other difficulties, would clearly explain to us by what miracle did it happen, that *Jesus* was ever after kept out of the hands of his enemies, and escaped the falling again a sacrifice to their enraged passions?

From his *third* remark we learn, that the Gentleman is so much out of humour with the first publishers of Christianity, that nothing in their character is able to please him. In his *first* remark,

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he represents St. Thomas as very extravagant in his demands, with respect to the evidence upon which he was willing to admit the truth of the resurrection of Jesus. *He would not believe that Jesus was risen from the dead, except he saw and felt the wounds that caused his death.* "What, (says the Gentleman) "was not Jesus to be known without them by his "own Disciples? Had they forgot the idea of his "person, and the sound of his voice, in so short a "time?—Were these prints better to be known "than the form of his person, which they had so "often seen?" After this manner does our Philosopher run on in condemnation of St. Thomas, for demanding too much. And yet, when Jesus appeared again to his Disciples, and said to Thomas, *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless but believing:* As Thomas upon this came to be fully satisfied, that the person now appearing was Jesus, and answered and said unto him, *My Lord, and my God!* Our Philosopher is not yet pleased with St. Thomas's conduct. He now condemns him for believing on too little, or upon no evidence at all. "He seems (says the Gentleman) "to have believed without proof of the identity of "his Master's real person." And then, with a silly sneer, subjoins; "a true faith in the resurrection, "rejects the evidence of sense: *Blessed are they "that have not seen, and yet have believed (a).*" A blessing which our Philosopher treats so contemptuously; and, to avoid it, puts himself in so ridiculous a dress, that, had not his Title-page told the world, *he is a moral Philosopher*, one should have been tempted to suspect, he only means to shew the

buffoon, and how contemptibly and inconsistently a ludicrous humour can argue in favour of infidelity.

His *4th and last* remark, is concerning a particular circumstance mentioned by St. John when Jesus appeared once and again to his Disciples. The circumstance is this : *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the Disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst.* And again, *then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst (b).* “ Here (says our Philosopher) it is suggested, that one solid or material body, passed through another solid or material body, without injuring the form of either, both the passing and passive body remaining the same, contrary to all the laws of nature (c).” What a mean carping disposition is this that takes hold of such a handle to raise such an objection ! Every man that has common sense himself, and allows as much to other people, will understand, that, by these expressions, St. John only means to represent to us the situation the Disciples were in, when Jesus appeared to them : They were afraid of the Jews, and for fear of being surprised, they had caused the doors of the house, where they were assembled, to be shut : Or possibly, this phrase, *the doors being shut*, may here rather denote that particular time of night, when people shut their gates to prevent loose idle vagrants from entering. Now, to the Disciples in those circumstances, or at that time of night, came Jesus, and stood in the midst : And he has certainly a strange imagination, that can here see it suggested, that to come at his Disciples, Jesus passed through doors or stone-walls.

(b) John xx. 19, 26.

(c) P. 50, 51.

stone-walls. But a man determined to oppose Christianity, is capable of forming the wildest images, and, without blushing, can go about to impose them upon other people. Elsewhere we are told, that when his Disciples were asleep, Jesus came unto them, and said, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (d). Now, would it not be ridiculous to alledge, that the Historian means, Jesus spoke all this to his Disciples fast asleep? And when it is here said, that when the doors were shut, Jesus came to his Disciples and stood in the midst; is it not equally ridiculous to alledge, that the Historian means, "the solid body of Jesus passed through the solid body of the doors?" No doubt, as in the former case, the Disciples came to be awakened; so, in the latter, the doors came to be opened. In short, if the Gentleman's imputation, in the case of St. John, be well founded, the best Historians, Pausanias in particular, must share in it. We are told, that, during the celebration of the festival of Bacchus, not far from the town of Elis, the god himself is pleased to honour the feast with his presence. And they give a proof of it, which citizens and strangers have leave to examine and know the truth of. "In the temple or chapel of Bacchus, they place three vessels quite empty; they lock and seal the doors; next day they return; and finding the doors still locked and sealed, they enter into the chapel, where they see the three vessels full of wine (e)." What! do both Priests and people, in their way to observe this miracle, pass through the solid doors of the temple! Such are the learned remarks of our Philosopher,

(d) Matth. xxvi. 40, 41.

(e) Pausan. lib. 6. cap. 2.

Philosopher, and let the world judge of their importance.

Before he concludes this remark, our Philosopher delivers his opinion as to the possibility of proving the reality of *Christ's* body after the resurrection. Is it then possible? "No, (says the Gentleman) "that's impossible. Every real miracle is an absurdity to common sense and understanding, and "contrary to the attributes of God; because it "breaks down the bounderies and laws of nature, "which are the only rules of truth and certainty "to mankind (f)." It seems surprising how a man of this opinion, has given himself so much needless trouble in finding out absurdities, inconsistencies, and contradictions, in the history of the resurrection, when, in so compendious a manner, only by shewing, that "every real miracle is an absurdity "to common sense, and contrary to the attributes "of God," he might have all at once overturned the whole structure of supernatural revelation. I confess, that, towards the end of his book, in a strange jumble of ranting stuff, that shews the confusion and perplexity of a labouring brain, he pretends to make out something of this nature. But, as I am not able to comprehend, how a man can hold the natural impossibility of a miracle, without, at the same time, avowing the atheistical philosophy of *Spinoza*; so I must beg leave to say, that however the Gentleman may intend them, he uses some expressions that seem plainly to bear the sentiments of that philosophy. Thus, among other things, he tells us, "a power to work miracles, is a power superior "to the universal laws, by which the system of "things are governed. This, (says he) is the "power

(f) P. 52.

" power of imagination only, and contrary to the
" attributes of God; to that which is the most
" clear of all others, his unchangeableness. The
" same causes must always produce the same ef-
" fects (g)." Is it then in our imagination only, that
that infinite mind has an existence, whose al-
mighty power, in the creation of the world, having
established the universal laws, by which the systems
of things are governed, must be conceived still su-
perior to those laws? Again we are told, " whe-
ther the divine, human, and mundane nature,
be mutable or immutable, there is no occasion for
the interposition of any miraculous power; be-
cause, if they change, they all change together,
whereby THE WHOLE comes under a new
system of universal laws, not in any particular
instances to be altered or controlled. And thus,
it happening upon every change that can be sup-
posed, as there is no occasion, so there can be no
interposition of any miraculous power. But if the
divine, human, and mundane nature, be immu-
table, (which implies, there is no power in THE
WHOLE superior to, or able to control the
universal laws, whereby things are governed,) as
things begin, so they must necessarily go on; no
miracles at first, no miracles can ever happen;
but once miracles, always miracles; for the same
causes must always produce the same effects: So
that, if miracles were ever necessary, they must
be always necessary; or if God ever wrought
miracles, as the proof of the revelation of his
will, he will always pursue the same method (b)."
This, in my apprehension, is our Philosopher's rea-
soning. And is there then so necessary a depen-
dence

(g) P. 78.

(b) P. 79, &c.

dence of the divine, human, and mundane nature, one upon another, that we cannot conceive the divine nature to have had an existence, before this present complexion of things? Or, supposing the human and mundane nature to come to be extinguished, (for what has had a beginning, may come to an end) must we at the same time likewise suppose the utter extinction of the divine nature? "If they change (says our Philosopher) they all change together." In short, Is the divine, human, and mundane nature, in such a situation, and so linked together, that all of them are equally involved in "the same absolute fatal necessity?" Once "miracles always miracles; the same causes must always produce the same effects." Indeed I cannot clear our Philosopher from being a Disciple of *Spinoza*. And, to be sure, in his Master's scheme of philosophy, a miracle is the absurdest thing in nature, a thing in itself absolutely inconsistent, and strictly impossible. Behold then the grand undertaker! wondrously well qualified, "to shew mankind the stupid nature of bigotry, to hold forth the acceptable light of truth, to recover the dignity of virtue, and to promote that veneration for wisdom and truth, which has been debased and degraded by faith (i)." In place of the doctrines of Christianity, he substitutes the principles of *Spinoza*!

Let us now consider what the Gentleman observes, 4tably, as to the other appearances mentioned by St. John and St. Paul. And here he declares himself with great conciseness.

"St. John (says he) tells us of more appearances of Jesus to his Disciples, than the other Evangelists

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" lists do, and after they say he ascended, or took
" his last leave of them ; it is sufficient therefore to
" say of St. John's evidence, that his destroys theirs,
" or theirs destroy his (k)." And as the other Evangelists, who relate, each of them, only one particular appearance of Jesus to his Apostles, do mention not one single word, or give not the most distant hint, of its being the only one, or the first and last, at which Jesus ascended, or took his last leave of them ; and I have made it clearly out, that it cannot possibly be so understood, but that other appearances must undoubtedly have happened ; it is sufficient here to say, in answer to our Philosopher, that St. John's evidence is altogether consistent with that of the other Evangelists ; and, to a man who understands the nature of history, there is not the faintest shadow of disagreement among them. Of such sort are the contradictions charged upon the Evangelists, that all Historians, from the beginning of time to the end thereof, treating of the same subject, must unavoidably be guilty of them, and thereby, in our Philosopher's account, mutually destroy each other's evidence ; whereof I have above given some instances. So that whatever credit our Philosopher may have otherwise acquired, he has certainly the honour of having invented a sponge for all history.

As for St. Paul's evidence, this too the Gentleman very soon dispatches. After exposing his wit, and repeating his old blunder in the case of the two Disciples ; he comes to tell us, " as St. Paul saw Jesus only in a vision, he seems to be in his visions about his relation of Jesus's appearances (l)." And must this impudent reflection, amidst a little more such pitiful raillery, blast the reputation of St. Paul,

(k) P. 53. (l) Ibid.

Paul, and invalidate his credit among mankind? The man is visionary beyond measure that can think so. Our Philosopher ought to keep his vanity within narrower bounds, and not affront the world in imagining, that his authority, or a little piece of his ill-grounded ridicule, must overbear and finally conclude the public judgment. St. *Paul* agrees with the rest, as the rest agree with one another. And among the rest there is all the agreement that can be expected, or that can be found among Historians of the best reputation: And, after the same manner, does St. *Paul* agree with all the New Testament Writers. "But the 500 brethren (he says) *Christ* " appeared to, are all lumped together, and might " as easily have been made 5000, and as hard to " prove or disprove the one as the other." And just so, the 2000 horse with which, *Livy* tells us, *Hannibal* marched to reconnoitre the city of *Rome*, are all lumped together, and might as easily have been made 4000, and as hard to prove or disprove the one as the other. Did ever moral Philosopher bless the world with such curious and instructive reflections? What now shall become of the defenders of revelation? The cause of infidelity must triumph in the hands of this philosophic Gentleman. Only it is great pity that his excess of modesty has prevented his trusting wholly to his clear and conclusive reasoning, and tempted him to admit the monstrous spirit of buffoonry, that overpowers and disgraces his moral philosophy, and presumes, at every turn, to help him out in his argument.

The *5th* and *last* point proposed by the Gentleman to be considered, is the ascension of *Jesus*, concerning which we are told, they also disagree, or contradict one another. And this disagreement, or contradiction

contradiction he pretends to make out in this manner :

" " St. *Mark*, (says he) and St. *Luke* acquaint us,
" that, after *Jesus* appeared to the eleven as they
" sat at meat, and had spoken to them, he ascended
" into heaven. St. *Luke* says, and with him the
" Author of the *Acts* seems to agree, that the place
" of his ascension was *Bethany*. So that if St. *Mark*
" means *Galilee*, he contradicts these. If he means
" the same place as these do, he contradicts himself ;
" for he says the Angel, or young man, told them
" *Jesus* was gone before the Disciples into *Galilee*,
" and there they should see him.—St. *Matthew*,
" St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke*; mention this appearance
" of *Jesus* to his Apostles, as the first and last
" time ; St. *John* and St. *Paul* say, it was not the
" last.—St. *Matthew* and St. *John*, who were
" two of the Apostles, and therefore should be
" those that saw his ascension, seem to say, that he
" never ascended ; at least they mention nothing of
" it. And, according to them, it is a question,
" whether he is gone yet (m)." This is our Philosopher's objection ; and it is apparent, that the whole stress of it lies upon his alledging, that as *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, do each of them mention only one appearance, so each of them means the first and last, or the only appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles. But none of these Evangelists having in the least insinuated any thing of that nature, but quite the contrary, the only reason whereby our Philosopher can pretend to justify his opinion, is their being barely silent as to any other appearance, which, I have often observed, cannot possibly avail him. This, however, is what in every instance he

seems wholly to rest upon. Only in the present case, with respect to *Matthew* and *John*, who do not expressly relate the ascension after the resurrection, though in the body of their history they openly avow it, and St. *John* in particular frequently mentions it very pointedly, he abates something of his confidence, and is not quite so positive, that their silence is an argument against the ascension, or that therein they contradict the other Historians who report it ; “ They seem, (says he) to say, that *Jesus* never ascended ; at least they mention nothing of it.” And how could they possibly say, or seem to say, that *Jesus* never ascended, when they mention nothing of that event ? As therefore our Philosopher seems here to allow, that the silence of *Matthew* and *John*, as to the ascension of *Jesus*, is no argument against the truth of that event, and can be held no contradiction to the report of other Historians who relate it ; so, if he condescends to be consistent with himself, he must likewise allow, that the bare silence of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, who mention each of them only one appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles, is no argument against the truth of his having made more appearances, and can be held no contradiction to the report of other Historians who relate them. But having already sufficiently explained this article, I shall here briefly examine, whether, betwixt the first appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles, and his ascension which St. *Luke* and St. *Mark* seem to connect immediately together, one has good reason to rest assured, that several other events must have interveened.

In general, I must again observe, nothing can be more certain, than that an Historian’s barely connecting two events immediately together, is no proof, no sort of evidence, that betwixt these two events

events there happened no intermediate ones. Whether any such happened, must be determined from the nature and circumstances of things, and from the accounts we have from other Historians. And considering the circumstances of this appearance mentioned by St. *Luke*, which was the first sight the Apostles had of *Jesus* after his resurrection, it cannot possibly be understood to be the last. Our Philosopher agrees, that this appearance is the same with the first of those related by St. *John*, who tells us it happened in the evening, or at night; and how far the night must have been spent, before this appearance could be concluded, one may learn, or reasonably conjecture, from St. *Luke*. His story is this:

Against the time that the two Disciples, with *Jesus* in their company, reached *Emmaus*, the day was far spent, and it was towards evening. Upon their importunity our blessed Saviour condescending to go with them into the house where they seem to have proposed to lodge that night, some time must have passed, and very probably it was now night or supper-time, against something to eat was prepared for them. While they were in the house, no doubt, the subject of their conversation by the way was renewed; and, as they sat at table, *Jesus* having been pleased to make himself known to them, 'tis reasonable to conceive, as I have above explained this passage, that he continued with them till supper was ended, or the repast was over: And thus the evening was far advanced, or it must have been a good deal later. After the two Disciples had come to the knowledge of *Jesus*, and *Jesus* had withdrawn from them, they rose up the same hour and returned to *Jerusalem*; and against the time they came to town, having walked more than seven miles, it must have been

been still farther on in the night. And supposing, that so soon as they arrived, they repaired directly to where the Apostles were assembled ; as they found them discoursing about an appearance of Jesus to *Peter*, no doubt, they gladly had the patience to hear the circumstances of that appearance, and then they told the company what things had happened in the way to *Emmaus*, and how *he was known of them in breaking of bread*; all which must have consumed some considerable time. In the interim, as they are relating those events, *Jesus* himself coming into the room, appears to them ; upon which, they being terrified and affrighted, he composes their minds ; he shews them the marks whereby they could not but distinguish him ; and having given them all possible proofs of the reality of his body, and that he had most certainly returned to life again ; he expounds to them the Scriptures, and from thence convinces them, that thus it behoved *Christ* to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day : In conclusion, he lets them know, how they were to be employed in the world, namely, *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*. *And ye, says our Lord, are witnesses of these things.* Now, as all these particulars, properly explained, as undoubtedly they were, could not pass in a moment, or in a few minutes, but necessarily required several hours ; of necessity one must apprehend, that by this time it was late, or pretty far in the night. Thus stands the story of this appearance. How then is it possible to imagine, that, after all this, when the night was so far spent, *Jesus led them out as far as to Bethany, a Sabbath-day's journey*, or at the distance of more than a mile, *and was there parted from them, and carried up into heaven?* Would not this represent the ascension to have

have happened at a time of night, when people should not be well able to distinguish the nearest objects, or one face from another, far less to *look steadfastly toward heaven, and to behold him as he went up, till a cloud received him out of their sight*; expressions, that import people's gazing up into heaven in broad day-light? Let our Philosopher be as confident as he will, that the history of the resurrection and ascension, is all forgery; if he will allow the contrivers to have had common sense, and impostors are not commonly destitute of this quality, I can appeal to himself, whether he really thinks, that immediately upon relating this appearance of *Jesus*, which happened at supper-time, *Luke* would have hurried on, and concluded it with a midnight ascension, when no body should be able to witness it? As *Luke* is supposed to have had the whole at his own framing; beyond all question, he would have made his story a little more feasible, and not told us a tale so very foolish and absurd, that no man of common sense can be thought capable of inventing it. In attending, therefore, to the circumstances of this appearance, (even supposing *Luke* an impostor, as our Philosopher would have him) one cannot but rest confident, that this could not possibly be the last appearance of *Jesus*, to his Apostles, at which he ascended.

Nor will the circumstances of the Apostles suffer us to conceive, that *Jesus*, after his resurrection, met his Apostles only once, and that, at this meeting, he took his last leave of them, and went up into heaven. From St. *Luke* himself we understand, that the Apostles had the strongest prejudices against the resurrection of *Jesus*, and could not believe the reports of their Fellow-disciples, that would have led them to apprehend he was risen. And yet these very men

men were to be employed in preaching repentance and remission of sins in the name of *Jesus*, among all nations beginning at *Jerusalem*; and, at the hazard of their lives, to testify to the world, that *Jesus was risen from the dead, and had ascended into heaven*. And to those men, thus prejudiced, and thus to be employed, is it to be imagined, that *Jesus* appeared only once, and that too, so late as when they were at supper; and, having discoursed with them for some time, immediately let them out as far as to *Bethany*, and there, *all things covered in darkness*, left them and went up into heaven? That things were transacted in so great a hurry, and in such unfitting circumstances, is beyond all probability; no man can believe it. The Apostles, indeed, at the first appearance of *Jesus*, might be satisfied of the truth of his resurrection. But, considering human nature, had they seen *Jesus* only once, the impressions they had received of the certainty of this event, might soon come to wear off, and their old prejudices return and prevail; nor could the hurrying them away so late that same night to *Bethany*, have at all helped them to retain their conviction. From the nature of things one must necessarily apprehend, that, to prepare the Apostles for being witnesses of the truth of the resurrection, *Jesus* must have appeared to them several times, till all their prejudices should be quite extinguished, and their conviction so firmly rooted in their minds, as to enable them to out-brave all dangers. Thus, from the nature and circumstances of things, which way soever they are taken, it is mighty evident, that this appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles, mentioned by St. Luke, can at no rate be understood to be the last: And I need not observe, that all the other Evangelists

lists plainly intimate, and St. John in particular expressly relates several other appearances.

Indeed, when St. Luke enters upon his account of the first appearance of Jesus to his Apostles, he goes on in a continued narration, all along connecting one thing with another, till he comes to his account of the ascension, without taking notice of any one intermediate appearance. And from hence, no doubt, a heedless and unskilful Reader, may be apt to apprehend, that this was the first and last, or the only appearance of Jesus to his Apostles. But, can so rash and ill-formed a conceit enter into the head of a man, who sets up to examine history, a moral Philosopher too, who pretends to bring the world from darkness to light, to remove all the false colouring of bigotry and delusion, with which Priests and impostors have disguised things, and to represent truth in its own native beauties? In relating this article of his history, St. Luke follows no course, but what is universally observed by all Historians whatsoever, they claim it as their common privilege, an undeniably branch of their liberty. As for St. Mark, it is obvious he does not connect together the first appearance of Jesus to his Apostles, and his ascension, in so strict a manner as St. Luke seems to do, but rather representing these two events as distinct or separate articles, he mentions the one immediately after the other, without taking notice of any intermediate appearance; and yet we know from St. Mark himself, as well as from other Historians, that, after the first appearance of Jesus at Jerusalem, the Apostles must have seen him in Galilee. Thus Polybius having informed us, that Scipio overthrew Indibilis, without mentioning any intermediate event, he immediately tells us, that Scipio came to Arragon:

And

And yet we know from *Livy*, that, betwixt the defeat of *Indibilis*, and *Scipio's* coming to *Arragon*, several events interveened, particularly *Scipio's* undertaking a long march, in order to have an interview with *Masanissa*. So that St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke*, in connecting these two distant events, the first appearance of *Jesus* and his ascension, immediately with one another, have done nothing but what all other Historians use to do. And our Philosopher may see, if his eyes are not still holden, that this manner of connecting these two events, is a shadow of reason, only for a thoughtless man, who little understands the nature of history, and the circumstances of things, to conclude, that this was the first and last, or the only appearance of *Jesus* to his Apostles.

But although St. *Luke* does not distinguish that space of time, that lies betwixt the first appearance of *Jesus* and his ascension, into distinct periods, according as he made his several appearances to his Apostles, but takes the whole in one view, and when he begins with the first appearance of *Jesus*, goes on till he comes to his ascension ; yet he seems to relate some articles, which a Philosopher, from the nature of things, and all circumstances considered, cannot but judge must have passed at some other appearance. Thus he tells us, that *Jesus* spoke in this manner to his Apostles : *And behold, says our Lord, I send the promise of my Father upon you. But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endowed with power from on high.* Now, as the first appearance of *Jesus*, with which St. *Luke* begins his narration, was most certainly at *Jerusalem* ; and as St. *Mark* intimates an appearance of *Jesus* in *Galilee* ; and we learn from St. *John*, that *Jesus* appeared to seven Disciples, at the sea of *Tiberias* ; and St. *Matthew* expressly

expressly tells us, that the Apostles went away into Galilee, into a mountain, where Jesus had appointed them, and there they saw him; I say, as the first appearance of Jesus was most certainly at Jerusalem, and we understand from *Mark*, *John*, and *Matthew*, that Jesus afterwards appeared to his Disciples in *Galilee*; it cannot well be imagined, that this charge of tarrying in the city of *Jerusalem* was given to his Apostles at his first appearance. It is true, the Gentleman's philosophy here enables him to alledge, that herein St. *Luke* contradicts the other Evangelists: "St. *Matthew* (says he) and St. *Mark* say, 'the Disciples were ordered to go to *Galilee*; St. *Luke*, and the Author of the *Act*s say, that they were ordered to stay at *Jerusalem*: St. *Matthew* says, Jesus met the Disciples for the first and last time, at a mountain in *Galilee*; St. *Luke*, that it was at *Jerusalem* (n)." And, I confess, had any of these Historians made this appearance of Jesus at *Jerusalem* or in *Galilee*, his first and last, or his only one to his Apostles, this objection would have been well founded. But, as I have already shewn (without mentioning the positive evidence of the other New Testament Writers) with what folly and absurdity our Philosopher pretends, from *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, that Jesus appeared only once to his Apostles: Since that the giving of this command to stay at *Jerusalem*, does not consist with the first appearance of Jesus, (for had it been then given, they could not have gone into *Galilee*). It must unquestionably have happened at some other appearance. And the appearance at which, it is highly probable, it happened, was either that in *Galilee*, at the mountain where Jesus had appointed them; or, that in *Jerusalem*, where Jesus seems to have as-

sembled his Disciples before he led them out to *Bethany*, in order to witness his ascension. Nor is this conduct of St. *Luke*, in connecting together, under one head, several articles that lie at a distance from one another, as they happened upon several occasions, any uncommon thing with Historians. *Suetonius* acquaints us, that three several times *Vitellius* appeared in public, offering to resign the government; and tells us, what he said upon each of those occasions. But *Tacitus* mentions only one of those public appearances, and under that one brings together what was said at each of them, reporting at the same time several particulars not taken notice of by *Suetonius*. And I may here venture to say, that the man, though a moral Philosopher, would be laughed at in the world, who, in order to discredit that piece of history, should alledge, that therein *Tacitus* and *Suetonius* contradict one another; *Suetonius* says, *Vitellius* appeared three times in public, offering to resign the government; *Tacitus* says, that he appeared only once.

Thus far I have considered this moral Philosopher's objections. And I would fain hope the Reader is fully satisfied, that without all foundation, and in open defiance against the strongest evidences to the contrary, he charges the history of the resurrection and ascension of *Jesus*, with inconsistencies, improbabilities, absurdities, and contradictions. Every sober man must be sensible, that this bold, furious charge only proves a wildness of imagination, and that the Gentleman's prejudices have acquired the strength "To remove mountains, and to swallow them up, as if they were cast into the sea (o)." He may talk what he will of the Christian faith; his Infidel faith, if I may speak so, is a little more miraculous

miraculous and wonderful ; it can obstinately believe things the most foolish and extravagant, that have no foundation either in reason or revelation. I know not what was our Philosopher's religious education ; but, I am confident, it was not his examining into the truth of the Gospel history, that first made him an Infidel. Some foolish person has told him, that the Christian institution is a cheat ; this he was so credulous as to believe, and this belief he takes upon him to justify and recommend to the world, by the foolish things he has published. I shall conclude with an account of the appearances of *Jesus* after his resurrection, in the order wherein I apprehend they happened.

On the morning of the resurrection, *Jesus* appeared to *Mary Magdalene*, and sent her to acquaint his Disciples, that he had returned to life, and that he was to ascend to the Father, but that he would first go into *Galilee*, and there they should see him. This appearance is related by St. *Matthew*, St. *Mark*, and St. *John*; and it seems designed to inspire the Apostles with the hopes of seeing *Jesus* alive from the dead, and to prepare them to meet him without any discomposure, or distraction of thought.—That same day, as two of his Disciples were going to *Emmaus*, *Jesus* came up with them, and entering into conversation upon the late event of his crucifixion, without discovering himself, he expounds to them the Scriptures, and from thence satisfies them, that Christ *ought to have suffered those things, and to enter into his glory*. Whilst they were thus discoursing, having arrived at the village, *Jesus* goes with them into the house where they proposed to lodge, and after he had made himself known to them as they sat at meat, he left them. Upon which the two Disciples rose up that same hour, and returned to *Jerusalem*,

salem, where they told the Eleven, and them that were with them, what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. This appearance is reported by St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke*. And as those two Disciples must have informed the Apostles, of the meaning of those Scriptures relating to the *Messiah*, as *Jesus* had expounded them ; this seems to have been designed to give the Apostles an opportunity of attending to the real sense of those Scriptures, without being disturbed or over-awed by the presence and authority of *Jesus* ; that coming thus, in cool reasoning, to perceive the fitness of those events which had happened, they might, with greater composure of mind, when *Jesus* should appear among them, examine the reality of his appearance, and receive his instructions to better advantage. These two appearances, therefore, seem to have been designed as preparatory to the Apostles.—Whether it happened before or after this appearance to the two Disciples, cannot be determined ; but the same day, *Jesus* likewise appeared to *Simon Peter*. This appearance is plainly enough expressed by St. *Luke*; and is particularly related by St. *Paul*. And, as *Peter* seems to have been a man of a bold, forward temper, possibly, it was the design of this appearance, to prevent any disagreeable or unbecoming effects which his forwardness might occasion, in the first transports of his seeing *Jesus*, and which would have greatly discomposed the other Disciples.—On the evening of the same day, before the discourse introduced by the two Disciples, who had been at *Emmaus*, was over, *Jesus* appears to the *Eleven, and those that were with them*, and affords them full conviction of the truth of his resurrection, letting them know, that all those events wherein he was concerned, had been foretold of their

their *Messiah* in the Scriptures. This appearance is related by *Mark*, *Luke*, *John*, and *Paul*.—After eight days, *Jesus* appears again to his Apostles, and as St. *Thomas* had not been present at the former appearance, and would not believe the report of the other Disciples, *Jesus* calls upon him in particular to satisfy himself fully, and to receive conviction from his own senses. This appearance is mentioned by St. *John*. All these appearances, except that to the two Disciples at *Emmaus*, happened at *Jerusalem*.—Again, *Jesus* appeared to seven of his Disciples at the sea of *Tiberias*; whither they seem to have gone, in order to attend the meeting that was appointed at a mountain there in *Galilee*: This appearance is reported likewise by St. *John*.—The Disciples having now come into *Galilee*, *Jesus* appears to them at the mountain, where he had appointed them. And here, it is highly probable, *he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once*. So that this appearance is related by St. *Matthew* and St. *Paul*, and intimated by St. *Mark*.—After this, St. *Paul* tells us, he was seen of *James*. And, as I take this *James* to be the brother of *John*, it may reasonably be supposed, that our Saviour foreseeing that, within a few years, this Apostle should be cut off by *Herod*, he might be pleased thus to distinguish him, in order to encourage and support him, when he should come to suffer for his sake.—The last appearance of *Jesus* to his Disciples, was on the day of his ascension, when he led them out from *Jerusalem* as far as to *Bethany*, and was from thence, in their view, carried up into heaven. This appearance is reported by St. *Mark*, and by St. *Luke* in his Gospel, and in the *Acts of the Apostles*; and to this appearance St. *Paul* seems to refer, when he tells

tells us, that *Jesus* was seen *of all the Apostles* (*p*) ; for under this designation were comprehended a great many other Disciples besides the Twelve, mentioned in the 5th verse.

This is the order, wherein the history of the appearances of *Jesus*, after his resurrection, directs one to apprehend them. And they are all consistent one with another, without the least shadow of contradiction. I have above fully explained of what nature those contradictions are, which our Philosopher has found out in the Gospel-history. And I leave with the Reader this one other instance, which the Gentleman's joke upon the passage just now mentioned from St. *Paul*, gives me occasion to observe ; and which still shews our Philosopher's disposition, and how unfit he is for serious argument. "St. *Luke* (says he) acquaints us, that this appearance was to the eleven Apostles ; St. *John*, that 'twas only to ten of them ; St. *Paul* says, 'twas to the twelve ; perhaps, he had forgot that one of them was fallen asleep (*q*)."
And thus, these Historians must be held to contradict one another. St. *Luke* indeed calls them the Eleven, expressing the precise number to which the college of the Apostles happened then to be reduced ; and herein, I suppose, he reports nothing but what is strictly true. In St. *John*, there is not a single word expressing the number Ten ; so far from it, that as out of all his Disciples *Jesus* had made choice of a certain number as his immediate servants, to be next his person, and constantly to attend him, and those from their number, were commonly called the *Twelve* ; so, notwithstanding the death of *Judas*, whose place came soon to be supplied, St. *John* continues to distinguish them

(*p*) 1 Cor. xv. 4.—7.

(*q*) P. 55.

them by the common appellation, and calls them *the Twelve*; But Thomas, says he, *one of the Twelve, called Didymus was not with them when Jesus came.* And the man is ludicrous indeed, who can find out a joke in St. Paul's using the same stile. I would gladly know, when a particular body or college of men are denominated from their number, and go by the name of *the Ten*, or *the Twelve*, or *the Fifteen*, can our Philosopher shew, there is any impropriety, not to speak of falsehood, in continuing to call them by that name taken from their number, even when their number, upon some occasions, by death or absence, happens not to be full? To make such things the ground upon which to charge any history in the world with contradictions and absurdities, serves only to proclaim either the ignorance or the malice of the accuser.

After what manner, in other instances, our Philosopher is affected, I know not; but in this argument he seems greatly given to wondering; pag. 37 and 38. he brings together half a dozen of his wonders: And, as I have already explained five of them, I shall here take some little notice of the one that remains, that the Reader may leave this subject in perceiving what sort of things astonish our Philosopher, and appear to him "amazingly "acted; a resurrection in the dark, seen neither "by friends, foes, nor indifferent spectators!" This amazes the Gentleman. He is amazed, not surely that Jesus arose without there being any light in the sepulchre, as if that had been necessary to warm and animate the dead body, or to shew Jesus his way out of the tomb. Nor can it be, that to help him out of the grave, he had need of the assistance either of friends, or foes, or indifferent persons. What then amazes our Philosopher? 'Tis precisely

precisely this: Neither friend, nor foe, nor indifferent person, was present in the sepulchre to see the dead body return to life again. And how could they? The sepulchre was sealed and guarded. The Gentleman is astonished, when every body else is quite composed and unmoved. "No body saw the first symptoms of returning life, and the dead body rising up again!" Does our Philosopher mean this as an argument against the truth of the resurrection of *Jesus*? *Dorcas* died.—Her friends lamented her.—And because they were not present in the upper-chamber with *St. Peter*, when he called her back to life again; would this have been ground enough for them to have denied, she had returned from the dead, when he presented her to them alive (*r*)? But is it not amazing, "That an Angel should impolitely frighten away the watch before *Jesus* came out of the sepulchre, so that they could be no witnesses of his resurrection, who would have been the most proper persons?" Mighty proper witnesses indeed, who were capable of being bribed to publish a lie: No such characters are employed to attest the truth of the resurrection of *Jesus*. But, as the Gentleman reckons, that the testimony of the watch would have been of such consequence, as to have put the matter beyond doubt, need I tell him what they witnessed to the chief Priests and Pharisees? In face of the Jewish Council, they openly declare, that whilst they were upon guard at the sepulchre, about such an hour in the morning, there was a great earthquake; that they saw a man descending from heaven, who came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it; that his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white

(*r*) Act. 9. 36. &c.

as snow, and that for fear of him they had fled. This is the watchmen's evidence. What does it mean;—What do the chief Priests understand by it? Upon this report, no doubt, they searched the sepulchre, and finding the body gone, did this evidence of the soldiers alarm them with no apprehensions of a resurrection? Or, did they think there was so little in it, that its coming abroad could have no influence to induce the world to believe that *Jesus* was risen? Their bribing the soldiers to suppress it, and to publish a lie, is a demonstration to the contrary. Here then are our Philosopher's "most proper persons, more than half a dozen watchmen, better than a dozen Apostles (s)," giving their evidence, though they saw not *Jesus* himself in favour, I must say, of his resurrection. But our Philosopher stands yet amazed: "An Angel impudently frightening away the watch before *Jesus* came out of the sepulchre!" But what had *Jesus* to do with those people? It would have disgraced the cause to have employed such characters to witness in it. And this, I am confident, would have been our Philosopher's argument, had the truth of the resurrection in any degree rested upon their evidence. Nothing therefore can shew better policy, than the Angel's chasing away those infamous Gentlemen. What they saw and felt at the sepulchre reported to the Council of the *Jews*, was some strong evidence to the chief Priests of their own procuring; and if it did not thoroughly convince them, it most certainly alarmed and confounded them, and, when they came to cool a little, served, I doubt not, to dispose them to listen to *Gamaliel's* proposition, *Refrain from these men, and let them alone: For if this counsel or this work be of*

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men,

(s) P. 64.

men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest happily ye be found even to fight against God. And to him they agreed (t).

Thus, I hope, I have said something towards composing our Philosopher's mind, and carrying off his amazement. And, in order to secure his inward quiet, let him consider further; had *Jesus*, before the Angel dismissed the guard, come out of the sepulchre, he must have fallen into the hands of the soldiers, who would have either immediately cut him off, or led him away prisoner to the Rulers of the *Jews*. It is true, he might have saved himself by a miracle. But why appear, and be put to save himself in this manner, when his own proper guards, the Angels, were able to protect him, both from the violence of their hands, and the discredit of their testimony? Nay, supposing the soldiers to have had it in their power to have reported, *they had seized Jesus coming out of the sepulchre, but that he having miraculously escaped, they know not what is become of him*; does the Gentlenian imagine, that this report would have had any better effect, in the case of the chief Priests, than the report they made of an earthquake and an Angel? Was it not then infinitely preferable, before *Jesus* should come out of the sepulchre, that an Angel should discharge the watch, and send away those rude perfidious men, who had so barbarously mocked and insulted the blessed *Jesus* when in their power, and came afterwards to sell their conscience for a piece of money? I confess, the introducing Angels into the history of the resurrection, gives occasion to our Philosopher to propound a great many impertinent scoffing questions (u). But if he believes there are Angels, and that

God

(t) *Acts v. 18.*

(u) *P. 66.*

God makes use of their ministry in the affairs of his Providence; where could they be more properly employed, than in attending the resurrection of his Son? Angels coming down from heaven, and assisting in this grand event, shews the intercourse that Jesus had with the Father, it clears and brightens his character, and supports all his pretensions, the whole of his conduct, by the divine approbation. And the watchmen's reporting what they saw and felt at the sepulchre, was not this a loud call to the chief Priests and Pharisees to moderate their passions, and to inquire into the matter with care and attention? This indeed they might resist, but it could not fail to awaken in their minds some violent suspicions, that this work might be of God, and they should not be able to overthrow it.

Thus the Reader sees, what sort of contradictions our Philosopher has found out in the Gospel-history, and what sort of wonders surprise him, and raise his amazement. His contradictions and his wonders are all seated in his own imagination, and have no where else any sort of existence. So that the authenticity of the Gospel-history is yet intire, still standing firm and unshaken.

But, as a very important branch of this history is made up of miraculous events, and some people are of opinion, that a miracle is a thing, either in itself impossible, or not capable of being ascertained by human testimony, or to whose existence the uniform experience of mankind is directly opposite, whereby they would make the New Testament a forged spurious composition, having no title to authentic history; I shall consider the importance of those sentiments: And the Reader, I hope, will soon perceive, with what folly and weakness such objections are urged,

urged, and at what an infinite distance they are from affecting the credit of the Gospel-history.

S E C T. IV.

A Miracle is an Event in itself credible, a proper Object of human Belief; and no Objection against its Existence can be drawn from the Nature of the Fact, or the common Experience of Mankind,

THE Gentleman, whose sentiments I have used the freedom to examine in the former Section, is pleased openly to declare, that a miracle is a thing in itself impossible. Whether a later Writer, in his *Philosophical Essays concerning human Understanding*, carries the matter as far, one cannot so well understand: But he plainly talks of a thing utterly absurd and miraculous (*x*), and of the absolute impossibility or miraculous nature of events (*y*). From which sort of language, one is tempted to suspect, that a miracle, and a mere absurdity, and an absolute impossibility, are, in his apprehension, so many different words precisely of the same import. And yet he seems elsewhere to admit the possibility of miracles; for he cautions his Reader in this manner: “I beg (says he) the limitation here made may be remarked, when I say, that a miracle can never be proved, so as to be the foundation of a system of religion. For I own, that otherwise there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof from human testimony; tho’ perhaps, it will be impossible to find any

(*x*) *Essay x. of Miracles*, p. 184.

(*y*) *Ibid. p. 195.*

" any such in all the records of history. Thus,
" suppose all Authors, in all languages, agree, that
" from the first of January 1600, there was a total
" darkness over the whole earth for eight days :
" Suppose that the tradition of this extraordinary
" event, is still strong and lively among the people :
" That all travellers, who return from foreign
" countries, bring us accounts of the same tradi-
" tion, without the least variation or contradiction ;
" it is evident, that our present Philosophers, in-
" stead of doubting of that fact, ought to receive it
" for certain, and ought to search for the causes,
" whence it might be derived (z)." Thus the
Gentleman will admit of miracles, upon his own
terms. And I have transcribed this passage, in or-
der to shew the Reader, what kind of miracles he
judges capable of proof from human testimony, pro-
vided they are no foundation for a system of reli-
gion.

It does not indeed greatly concern the argument, but I would beg leave here to observe, the Gentle-
man appears to me very unfortunate in the choice of
his miracle, both as to the season of its appearance,
and the time of its duration : In both which articles,
'tis impossible, in the nature of things, but mankind,
then living, must have greatly varied in their sen-
timents, and contradicted one another. It is, cer-
tainly, in itself, ill-contrived and ridiculous. The
Gentleman, therefore, had better save his invention,
and leave it to Providence to determine, when,
and where, and what sort of miracles are most pro-
per to be wrought for the benefit of mankind. Nor
can I well understand, how, in the case of this mi-
racle, as he has defined such an event, he comes to
talk

(z) *Ibid.* p. 199. Marg.

talk of Philosophers their searching for the causes, whence it might be derived. So that, I say, I am still at a loss to know, whether he allows the possibility of miracles. However, as he goes upon that supposition, I shall presume to follow him. And he begins his argument with a most important article of intelligence, giving us to understand, he has discovered an argument, which, he flatters himself, will at length settle the minds of mankind, those of them, at least, who are wise and learned; and put an end to all that stir and bustle, that hitherto has been made about the Christian Revelation.

"I flatter myself, (says he) that I have discovered an argument, which, if just, will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion; and consequently, will be useful as long as the world endures. For so long, I presume, will the accounts of miracles and prodigies be found in all profane history (a) :" And particularly, as the Gentleman most certainly means, in the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*. From this introduction, some people may be apt to imagine, we are going to differ with a Gentleman not a little conceited of his own abilities. But, as Superstition is a most unworthy misrepresentation of God, setting up in his room, an ill-natured, captious, and whimsical being; and, as it is an abject perplexing passion, always disquieting to the human mind, and often productive of public confusion and misery; it is certainly a noble generous attempt, to deliver mankind from the dread and terror, from all the cruel oppressions of this home-bred capricious tyrant. I confess our Deliverer gives us no hint, whether, after his having thus relieved us from this gloomy

(a) P. 174.

gloomy thraldom, he means to assert us *into the liberty of the children of God, that, being delivered out of the bands of our enemies, we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.* Possibly, having brought us out of bondage, and made us masters of ourselves, he may be in some dread, that should we again mind religion, or submit to worship God in any shape, this would bring us again into bondage, again involve us in superstitious delusions. But, whatever be the reason of our not having his instructions as to the religion one may safely espouse and follow, after our deliverance from every sort and every degree of superstitious delusion, it must be acknowledged, the releasing mankind from the meanest and the most oppressive slavery, is an action highly meritorious. And indeed the Author may well be allowed to plume himself upon it. No one rival or partner has he to share with him in the glory. Of himself, purely by the strength of his own proper genius, he discovered this long-wanted argument, which will be a check, an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusions; and, as long as the world endures, ruin the credit of all miracles, and proclaim all former generations of men, *Heathen, Jew, or Christian,* silly dupes in believing them.

After all, as the merit of new inventions is sometimes found to consist in a little quackery; or as the eagerness of a man's passion, in opposition to superstitious delusions, may sometimes hurry him beyond the bounds of nature, and warping the judgment, bring forth an argument, in the Author, meer delusion, and upon the world, gross imposition (b). One must take

(b) The Gentleman's case may, perhaps, be described from Lord Shaftesbury, who tells us, that "Superstition itself is but

take the liberty fairly to examine this new invented argument, of which the Author makes so great a boast. But, before I enter into this examination, that the Reader may have an open view of the important question now in hand, and be the better able to give judgment, I shall first, with all freedom, declare my sentiments in relation to miracles, and the evidence upon which the actors or reporters of them may be counted worthy of credit; and endeavour to explain after what manner we may satisfy ourselves as to the judgment and veracity of any Historian.

A miracle, then, is a sensible effect, produced either by the immediate power of God, or by the power of some invisible Agent, under the direction or permission of God, in suspending or altering any particular law of nature in such a particular instance,

for

" a certain kind of fear, which possessing us strongly with the
" apprehended wrath or displeasure of divine Powers, hinders us
" from judging what those Powers are in themselves, or what
" conduct of ours may, with best reason, be thought suitable to
" such highly rational and superior natures. Now (continues
" this noble Author) if, from the experience of many gross delu-
" sions of a superstitious kind, the course of this fear begins to
" turn; 'tis natural for it to run, with equal violence, a contrary
" way. The extreme passion for religious objects passes into an
" aversion. And a certain horror and dread of imposture causes
" as great a disturbance as even imposture itself had done before.
" In such a situation as this, the mind may easily be blinded, as
" well in one respect, as in the other. 'Tis plain, both these
" disorders carry something with them which discover us to be
" in some manner beside our reason, and out of the right use of
" judgment and understanding. For how can we be said to in-
" trust or use our reason, if, in any case, we fear to be convinced?
" How are we masters of ourselves, when we have acquired the
" habit of bringing horror, aversion, favour, fondness, or any o-
" ther temper than that of mere indifference and impartiality, in-
" to the judgment of opinions, and search of truth?" Characterist. vol. iii. p. 65.

for ends and purposes suited to the nature of the agent. So that miracles are the actions of a higher order of Beings. So far, however, are such actions from being comprehended in the natural course of acting that is proper to those Beings, and wherein they are constantly employed, that, even with regard to those Beings, such actions are uncommon and extraordinary, and cannot be performed by them without their moving out of their common sphere of action, and attending to the production of a strange work, to which they are not accustomed. And doubtless the motive must be weighty, the reason very important, that can determine any of those Beings to leave their proper work, and going out of their common road, if I may speak so, exert themselves in producing an event, in every respect strange and extraordinary.

But, as all miracles, wrought for the common benefit of mankind, are either by the immediate efficiency, or the express appointment of the great Lord of the universe, these may justly be regarded as the works or operations of God. And, viewing miracles in this light, we are led to conceive, that, as an infinitely perfect Being has established general laws, whereby all events are brought about and directed; and as, in his all-wise, and all-good, and all-powerful Providence, he is continually attending to the irresistible efficacy, and the steady progression of those laws, in all instances, all over the universe, so if, in any particular instance, this great Being shall be pleased to stop the progress of such a certain general law, still efficacious in all other instances, and thereby interrupt the uniformity of his administration, producing an event quite out of the settled course and order of his government; must we not apprehend, the reasons are of high import-

ance, worthy the character of an infinitely perfect Being, that could move him to interpose in so uncommon and extraordinary a manner,—in such a particular instance, to suspend the force of a general law, and produce an event of so singular a nature? Beyond all question, the nature and quality of the action or event, its design and tendency, must be of that complexion, and of that importance that will fairly suit the wisdom and goodness, the greatness and dignity of the character concerned in the production. And thus, in my apprehension, not only have we easy access to a certain *criterion* whereby to judge what miracles are divine, or may be esteemed the extraordinary works of God; but we may likewise clearly understand, that

The same evidence that is sufficient to convince us of the truth of any common event happening among mankind, is not sufficient to ascertain the truth of a miracle. For, as to those events, wherein our fellow-men are the sole actors, and that happen in the common course of things, our knowledge of human nature, and our experience of mankind, enable us to judge of the probability or truth of human actions, in such characters and in such circumstances. But, although our own consciousness, and our experience of the world may serve us directly to apprehend the motives and springs of human actions, and thereby engage us readily to admit such particular actions, as real matters of fact, when reported by creditable witnesses; yet in relation to the extraordinary works of God, wherein he is pleased to recede from the common tract of his administration, and in such a particular instance to suspend the force of a general law, which, in all other instances, is still prevailing, it is impossible we can all at once clearly discern, and safely judge of the motives, worthy the sovereign

sovereign Ruler of the universe, that might bring about such an amazing interposition. Here, therefore, we must stop; till we shall have examined the matter with that care and impartiality that suit the importance of the question. Nor, whilst we are totally ignorant, uninformed, or not satisfied as to those divine motives productive of miracles, can the report of any witness, how creditable soever in the common incidents of life, with any shew of reason, engage our faith, or deserve to be credited. Let me repeat it again, the actions here in question, are not the common operations of God, or the ordinary productions of his Providence; they are his very extraordinary works, and must be the effects of some particularly grand design suited to the greatness and majesty of the Agent, not immediately obvious to the human mind. As therefore in all miracles there are two things particularly to be regarded, namely, the visible or sensible effect, and the invisible and extraordinary interposition of the Deity effecting it; so, notwithstanding the former, the sensible effect may possibly be attested in the most authentic and solemn manner, by witnesses in all other respects unexceptionable; yet this, of itself, can be no sufficient foundation upon which to ground an assurance of the latter, the invisible and extraordinary interposition of God. Of this we can be assured only by an evidence peculiar to itself, wherein we perceive, in some measure, the great designs of an infinitely perfect Being, designs that cannot be accomplished by the present establishment of God in the natural frame and structure of the universe. Thus to me it appears manifest, that the same evidence that is sufficient to convince us of the truth of the common events of life, is not sufficient to ascertain the truth of a miracle.

At

At the same time, there is a number of miracles noised abroad, that seem to require no examination, in order to our discovering their origin and design, and to our judging of their credibility. Of such sort of miracles, without having recourse to common history, we have great plenty in the public offices of the church of *Rome*, I mean in their *Breviary*, the established form of their solemn, religious worship, where those miracles must be regarded as the foundation of their devotion, or of their adoring Saints and images (*e*). But I proceed to this other observation :

In

(*b*) In the festival of St. Stanislaus Bishop of Cracow, we are assured, that this Saint, having no other way whereby to clear himself from a charge of sacrilege brought against him by the King in an assembly of the States, commanded one Peter, who had been dead three years, to rise out of his grave ; and, as he had before undertaken, this very man he produces in open court as an unexceptionable witness to attest his innocence. But neither this, nor any other miracle, was able to repress the King's resentment against him : For, as the soldiers that were sent to murder the Bishop in his church, had been repelled twice by a secret force, and once from heaven ; the King himself with his own hands dispatched him, and cutting him in pieces, scattered his members through the fields. Nevertheless, his Majesty had it not in his power to prevent the miracles that continued to be wrought in this Saint's justification : For, whilst eagles defended every portion of the Bishop's body from ravenous beasts, the Canons of his church came by night, and discerning the scattered members by means of a brightness shining on them from heaven, they gathered them together, and placing them, each in its natural situation, immediately those members united with one another, and again made up the body of the Saint, without so much as the scar of a wound. Upon these, and many other miracles, Pope Innocent IV. canonized St. Stanislaus. *Breviar. Festa Maii 7 D.*

But had not Tuccia, the Vestal virgin, an equal title among the Heathen, to be fainted or deified, as she justified her innocence likewise by a miracle ? *Arrepto enim cribro : Vesta, inquit, si sacris tuis castas semper admovi manus, effice, ut hoc hauriam e Tiberi aquam, et in aedem tuam perferam. Audaciter et temere jactis*

In settling the character of any Historian, or how far such a man's testimony, as to the matters of fact reported by him, may be trusted; our conviction of the credit due to him, must be founded, not upon the opinion of other people, whether his contemporaries or not, but upon his own writings, which ought to be the sincere, genuine effects of his veracity and judgment. Nor, in our thus going about to satisfy ourselves from his writings, concerning the veracity and judgment of any particular Historian,

is

jactis votis sacerdotis, rerum ipsa natura cessit. Valer. Max. lib. viii. cap. 1. As for the rest of the Popish miracle, it is a part of the story of Hippolytus; in whose case the miracle, as it rises higher, and gives life to the scattered members when joined together, seems to have more sense and reason in it. The Reader, I hope, will not judge it an indecency, that I here give him an account of it from Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, B. i. cant. 5. stanz. 38, 39. where it is represented thus:

His goodly corps on ragged clifts yrent
Was quite dismembred, and his members chaste
Scatter'd on every mountain, as he went;
That of Hippolytus was left no monument.

* * * * *

— His rash fire began to rend
His hair, and hasty tongue that did offend :
Who gathering up the reliques of his smart,
By Dian's means, who was Hippolytus's friend,
Them brought to Æsculape, that by his art
Did heal them all again, and joined every part.

For Diana, as Ovid observes, was mightily concerned for this disaster of Hippolytus. But there is no cause of sorrow, says Æsculapius :

Namque pio juveni vitam sine vulnere reddam,
Et cedent arti tristia Fata meae.

* * * * *

Pectora ter tetigit, ter verba salubria dixit,
Depositum terrâ sustulit ille caput.

Ovid. Fast. lib. vi. & 747.

Again,

is it enough that we consider the nature and importance of the matters of fact he relates, or that we compare the several parts of his history together, or that we examine them by the accounts of other Historians, or by the circumstances of that time and place of the world to which his history refers; but we ought, in an especial manner, to attend, whether those particular actions he reports, are suited, or do fairly answer to the character and circumstances of those persons to whom he imputes them.

Indeed,

Again, the Roman Breviary, having mentioned several articles concerning Dionyius the Areopagite, which all the world now knows to be mere forgery, goes on, and tells us, that this Saint, when above an hundred years old, having suffered martyrdom for the sake of the Gospel, after his head was severed from his body, took it up in his hands, and carried it two miles. *Dionyius anum agens supra centesimum, cum reliquis securi percutitur septimo Idus Octobris.* De quo illud memoriae proditum est, abscissum suum caput sustulisse, et progreßum ad duo millia passuum manibus gestasse. Festa Octobr. 9 D. There are indeed other instances of the same nature in the church of Rome; such as that of Oriculus, who, after his head was struck off, went and washed it in a fountain; and by his finger with his blood drew the sign of the cross upon a rock, said, in my Author's time, to be still very visible; and then, with his head in his hands, retired into the sepulchre which he had built for himself: Where many miracles are said to have been wrought. Flodoardi hist. ecclesiae Rom. lib. i. cap. 8. But I am not able to recollect where the Heathen can boast of such prodigies. Only, if I am not greatly mistaken, it is somewhere said, that a Priest of Jupiter being murdered, and every attempt to find out the murderer having failed, the Priest's head, severed from his body, made the discovery, and told distinctly that such a particular person had murdered him.

I shall only add, that Trajan having condemned Clemens Romanus to be cast into the sea, with an anchor bound to his neck; as some Christians upon the shore were putting up their prayers, the sea going back three miles, this led them forward to where they found a little lodge of marble in form of a church, and in it a coffin of stone, wherein lay the body of the martyr, and near to it the anchor which had been tied about his neck. Festa Novembr. 23 D.

How

Indeed, as all the individuals of human kind are of a mixed character, one cannot expect from the truth of things, to meet with a perfect uniformity of action in any man, all wisdom or all folly, all virtue or all vice. And for this reason, although in some instances that suit not a man's main temper and character, it may be difficult to discern the real truth, yet there are actions quite suitable, and therefore very credible, in one man's character, which in another man's, one easily perceives, would be absolutely inconsistent, and beyond the bounds of credibility. Thus, that extravagantly wild and ridiculous expedition of *Caligula*, which ended in the gathering of cockle-shells, the spoils, as the tyrant termed them, of the conquered ocean, due to the capitol and palace, and upon which he caused preparations to be made for a triumph; how well soever such an action may answer, and deserve credit in the character

How far this Popish miracle is of kin to a very odd story concerning an image of Theagenes, told by Pausanias, the Reader may judge: " After the death of Theagenes, one of his enemies taking an opportunity by night, to wreck his revenge against him, falls a lashing his image with such violence, that the image falls, and by its weight, as it was of brads, kills the man. The image therefore is by the dead man's sons accused of murder; and being found guilty, it is solemnly condemned, and cast into the sea. After this a famine happening, and the Oracle at Delphi being consulted after what manner they should appease the gods, in order to be delivered from this calamity; they are commanded to recall Theagenes, and to restore him to his place. This perplexes the Thasians greatly. But, as some Fishermen were out at sea, and had the good fortune to inclose this image in their net; by this means Apollo comes to be obeyed; the image of Theagenes is brought back, and put in its former place; it receives divine honours; and works miracles." Pausan. lib. vi. cap. 11. Can anything more nearly resemble a Popish miracle?

Such kind of miracles are very numerous in the Roman Breviary, but too absurd and contemptible for inquiry or argument,

character of *Caligula*, most manifest it is, that in the character of *Julius Cæsar*, it would be utterly repugnant, and altogether incredible. I say, therefore, that, in determining the credit of an Historian from his writings, or how far his judgment and veracity are to be depended on, one ought to observe very particularly, whether the actions he relates, do really suit the undoubted characters of the Agents. And as herein, with respect to mixed or imperfect characters, the hazard of our being mistaken becomes always less, in proportion to the constancy of an Agent in such a certain series of actions ; so, where the character is absolutely perfect, and cannot therefore but always uniformly pursue the measures of wisdom and goodness, if one is not biased by strong prejudices, one cannot well be mistaken in apprehending the actions that are worthy, or that suit such a character ; and consequently, in judging how far the veracity and judgment of an Historian, in reporting such particular actions to have been done by such an Agent, deserve to be regarded.

Here then, in the case of miracles, actions wherein an infinitely perfect character is concerned, no Historian, in his account of such events, ought to be credited, before we are fully satisfied, that those particular actions, ascribed to a divine interposition, do most certainly correspond with the nature and perfections of an all-wise and all-good Being, the sovereign Governor of the universe. And thus considering the nature and perfections of God as an infallible standard, whereby to judge of the credibility of miracles, of divine extraordinary interpositions, and consequently of the judgment and veracity of the person who reports them ; no man void of prejudice, who attends to the nature and administration of the Deity, as we learn them from the works of

of Creation and Providence, in the natural frame and course of things, can expect to meet with frequent miracles, with miracles in every age, or with miracles to be regarded by mankind, that are not of the highest consequence to mankind. So that in the belief of miracles, by whomsoever reported, every man is bound, in duty to God, and as he values his own good, and the good of others, to use the utmost caution, and to believe none, but which, after the most exact and rigorous scrutiny, he clearly perceives are worthy of God, and deservedly esteemed divine operations. And how many ages of miracles, since the days of the Apostles, such a conduct must cut off, I leave to the judgment of the Reader (c).

VOL. I.

L I

I have

(c) Having explained by what criterion one may judge, whether such particular miracles do really come from God ; and here laying it down as an undoubted maxim, That in a competition of miracles, we ought in reason, to be determined by those that are incontrovertibly superior ; I shall proceed to observe, that

A particular system of religion, or rather of religious rites, which God has established by miracles, may be abrogated or altered, and another substituted in its room, which mankind are bound to submit to, when God shall be pleased to justify it by another set of miracles superior to the former. And this, in my apprehension, is manifestly the case with respect to the Jewish institution, which, in its original frame, being only temporary, behaved to give way to the Christian Revelation : And this change our Saviour and his Apostles did fully justify to the Jews, by miracles more and greater than ever had been wrought in Israel.

But, as we are assured, that beings of different and opposite characters do work miracles of a contrary tendency ; and nothing can be more certain, than that the herd of mankind are not able, by abstract reasoning, to distinguish to which side reason or the nature of things necessarily directs them ; one cannot but apprehend, that in such circumstances, in order to carry the consent of mankind, the superior Being ought to give full and open proof of his superiority. And this I take to be the case of the Heathen and Christian institutions with respect to one another.

That the Heathen world did firmly believe, that they had numberless miracles wrought among them, is beyond question.

Cf

I have just now hinted, that even with respect to a mixed or imperfect character, some actions are absolutely incredible, so unworthy, and unsuitable to the supposed Agent, that an Historian, in reporting them, would immediately forfeit all his veracity and judgment. But of such inconsistencies and contradictions, with respect to a character infinitely perfect, how much more sensible must we be, to the total

Of those miracles I shall have occasion to take notice afterwards: Here I shall give only a small specimen, from whence the Reader may judge to what a height the Heathen went in their belief of such events. Pausanias having told us, " That Æsculapius was " the son of Apollo; that intending to conceal his birth, his " mother Coronis exposed the infant on a mountain of Epidaur- " rus; that a goat and a dog left the herd pasturing upon the " mountain, the one to suckle the child, and the other to guard " him; that the Goat-herd, in seeking after the goat and his " dog, lighted upon the infant, and was designing to have taken " him up; but as he approached, observing a lustre of divinity " issuing from him, he retired: Immediately (says the Historian) " it was published by sea and land, all over the world, that " Æsculapius cured all manner of diseases, and even raised the " dead." Pausan. in Corinth. lib. ii. cap. 26.

Now, as all such miracles, whereby the Heathen were strongly attached to their gods, were confessedly wrought (for I do not here call their reality into question) by Beings of a character altogether different and opposite to the character of the Author of the miracles of the Gospel; one should think, that in order to dissolve this attachment of the Heathen world to their idols, and to gain them over to the worship of the true God, it was indispensably necessary, not only that miracles should be wrought, but that the Christian miracles should carry in them a manifest superiority above all those miracles wrought among the Heathen. Accordingly, the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord, not only gave the world an authentic account of the miracles of Jesus, (whose credibility the Heathen had it in their power, and were at full liberty to examine) but they themselves travelling over the face of the earth, did every where, among all nations, in town and country, in the most frequented and public places of the world, in the seat of the Roman empire, work all manner of miracles. And as these miracles did every where appear manifestly superior to all that were in the Heathen world; so, infinite numbers of Heathens thereby moved,

total discredit of the Reporter? St. *Dominic*, a most renowned Saint, and a mighty worker of miracles, the founder of one of the most considerable Orders of the church of *Rome*, " Being one night in his studies, greatly disturbed by the devil in the shape of a monkey, came to be so provoked, that, by an interposition of the divine power, he severely punished the devil in that ludicrous shape, causing him

moved, came to forsake their idolatry, and to embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thus, therefore, in the days of the Apostles, the superiority of the Gospel-miracles above all that were among the Heathen, was fully established. And after this, for what good reason, can any man imagine, should miracles be continued in the church of God? Certain it is, if it be not where they are samples of the doctrines taught, as in the case of the resurrection, miracles of themselves can prove the truth of no doctrine whatsoever; otherwise, being wrought by contrary characters, they might prove the truth of contrary doctrines. And as Christians can stand in need of no more miracles, upon which to ground their faith of the Gospel; and are only to bear in mind this seasonable warning of our Saviour, *If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false Prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders.* Matth. xxiv. 23, 24. So the miracles of the Gospel being incomparably superior to those of the Jewish institution, by no means can the Jews reasonably withstand the force of these miracles. Nor can the Heathen world, as there is full and ample evidence, easy to be apprehended, that the miracles of Jesus and his Apostles are, by infinite odds, preferable before any miracles they can pretend to have been wrought by their deities, have any colour of reason to demand any more. And after this, I say, to what good purpose can miracles serve, or for what good reason can we conceive God will still interpose, and continue to suspend or alter, in any instance, his established laws of nature? May not one presume to think, that, after the days of the Apostles, the Gospel of Jesus Christ was left, with the assistance of numberless miracles already wrought, and already prevalent over great numbers of all ranks in all nations, to maintain and extend its conquests in the world, by its own inward native force and excellency, arising from its entire conformity to the nature and perfections of God, and its exact fitness to promote, in every stage of our existence, the real and lasting happiness of mankind?

" him hold his candle to him, till it had burnt him
 " to the bone." At another time, " Some devils
 " having entered into a man, who had the impiety
 " to make a mock of *Dominic* and his *Rosary*; this
 " good Saint, void of revenge, and full of huma-
 " nity, is prevailed upon to *exorcise* this unhappy
 " demoniac. But, as the devils happened to re-
 " fuse to answer some questions he had put to
 " them, the *Virgin Mary*, attended with a numerous
 " train of Angels, comes from heaven, and, join-
 " ing the assembly, she assists the Saint in his office,
 " and with her rod switching the demoniac, forces
 " the devils to make answer. At length St. *Domini-*
 " *c*nic with a loud voice, calling upon all present to
 " join him in reciting his *Rosary*; behold! at e-
 " very angelical salutation, a multitude of devils
 " came rushing out of the demoniac, in the shape of
 " burning coals. Thus the poor man is relieved.
 " And the Virgin, having given the congregation
 " her blessing, disappeared (d)." Such are the ac-
 counts

(d) It may not, perhaps, be unacceptable to some of my Readers to be informed, that the *Rosary*, a present of the blessed Virgin to St. *Dominic*, is an aggregate or heap, no less than an hundred, of *Ave Marias* (the Angel's salutation to the Virgin, Luke i.) with a *Pater-noster* interposed at the end of every ten: All which, in order to secure the merit of saying them, which, by missing but one of the number, would be entirely lost, are counted on beads. Nor can this chaplet of beads have its place otherwise supplied: For those very beads, being blessed by the Pope, have several indulgences, or some particular divine graces or virtues, annexed to them. So that the same number of *Ave Marias* said or counted upon one's buttons, for example, or after any other manner, would have no good effects attending them. Like all the other trinkets stamped with the Pope's benediction, these beads, without regarding the moral dispositions of the mind, have a physical influence in extinguishing the guilt of sin, and in procuring the favour and protection of heaven.

I cannot but here observe, that as this *Rosary* was invented by St. *Dominic*, for the perdition of human souls; so, by the same renowned Saint was the Inquisition invented, for the destruction of human bodies!

counts that in some ages have greatly abounded ; and perhaps the like events are, in some places, still happening. But, to put upon the world such impudent, silly stories, as miracles, the wonderful works, not of impudent cheats and jugglers, but of the sovereign Lord of the universe, is, beyond measure, profane and impious. Those enthusiastic madmen think nothing of the great God, but to make him subservient to the vilest and the most irreligious purposes. So far are such senseless wicked tales from having one single circumstance of credibility, that they only violently shock the common sense of mankind, and among people not altogether infatuated by superstition, must immediately meet with the utmost contempt. But, what I here propose, is, to impress the Reader with a sense of this important truth,

The credibility of miracles, the supernatural actions of God-Almighty, a Being absolutely perfect, must arise particularly from the congruity they bear to his nature and perfections. This is the particular circumstance, without which no Worker or Reporter of miracles can approve his integrity, or his veracity and judgment, to the good opinion of any man of sober sense and reason. It is this particular circumstance that I mainly point at, when I mention the credibility of miracles. In a word, in all miracles, wherein such a congruity is not apparent, the presumptions against them are invincible. Nor can the world otherwise save themselves from the impositions of weak, credulous minds, bearing a shew of piety and honesty ; or from the forgeries of fly, designing Impostors, that lie in wait to deceive. From all which, one may easily apprehend, that where the nature and perfections of God are not known, or not attended to, *i. e.* where true, rational religion, that

that religion which cometh down from the Father, does not prevail ; there weak, superstitious minds must boast of their visionary conceits ; there bold, crafty impostors must triumph in their delusions (e).

Thus far I have freely declared my sentiments concerning miracles, and upon what evidence the Workers or Reporters of them may be judged worthy of credit ; which may help us to a better understanding of the present question. So that I now come to consider this mighty argument that is to do so much execution. And the great Inventor of it introduces it after this manner :

He tells us, that our experience is the ground upon which our assurance as to the real truth of matters of fact, is founded ; and that from the highest degree of assurance we may be brought down to the lowest, till it comes totally to fail us, according as the constancy or frequency of our experience happens to decrease, and at last wholly to vanish. After this, the Gentleman comes to the point, and thus proceeds : “ A miracle (says he) is a violation “ of the laws of nature ; and as a firm and unalter-“ able experience has established these laws, the “ proof against a miracle, from the very nature of “ the fact, is as intire as any argument from expe-“ rience can possibly be imagined. Why is it more “ than probable, that all men must die ; that lead “ cannot, of itself, remain suspended in the air ; “ that fire consumes wood, and is extinguished by “ water ; unless it be that these events are agree-“ able to the laws of nature, and there is required “ a violation of these laws, or, in other words, a “ miracle,

(e) Such was always the unhappy state of mankind : Prodigia eo anno multa nunciata sunt, quae quo magis credebat simplices ac religiosi Homines, eo etiam plura nunciabantur. Liv. lib. xxiv. § 10.

" miracle, to prevent them ? Nothing is esteemed
" a miracle if it ever happen in the common course
" of nature. It is no miracle, that a man in seem-
" ing good health, should die of a sudden ; because
" such a kind of death, though more unusual than
" any other, has yet been frequently observed to
" happen. But it is a miracle, that a dead man should
" come to life ; because that has never been ob-
" served, in any age or country. There must,
" therefore, be an uniform experience against every
" miraculous event, otherwise the event would not
" merit that appellation. And, as an uniform ex-
" perience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct
" and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against
" the existence of any miracle ; nor can such a
" proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered cre-
" dible, but by an opposite proof that is superi-
" or (f)."

This is the decisive argument, which, the Gentleman flatters himself, will, with the wise and learned, for ever ruin the credit of all miracles, and, while the world lasts, prove an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion. How far such sanguine expectations may come to be gratified, as to the success of this argument with the wise and learned, the Gentlemen of that character are best able to judge. Only, as it is not altogether so new, as it is here represented, other people, perhaps, may by this time, be able to form a conjecture. For my part, I am apt to think, that it requires no great stock of wisdom and learning to understand the weakness and fallacy of this wondrous argument. Of such consequence, I confess, it appears to me, that if this Gentleman be not pleased to renew his labour to better purpose, I am afraid the world must have

(f) P. 180.

have the misfortune still to remain in a state of delusion. I shall here impartially consider it in its several branches, and as I am concerned only for truth, give them all the weight they can possibly bear.

First of all, then, the Gentleman tells us, “ A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature;” or, as he observes in the margin, “ A miracle may be accurately defined, a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposal of some invisible Agent.” But what accuracy is there in imputing a transgression of any kind to the Deity? Indeed, if it be a firm and unalterable experience of ours, as the Gentleman seems to say, that has established the laws of nature, we may, in that case, pretend a right to complain, and to call it a transgression, when, in any instance, those laws are by other Beings incroached upon, or not uniformly observed. But, as the laws of nature, I mean, of the material world, (having nothing in them, like geometrical and moral truths of absolute necessity) are the arbitrary establishment of the Deity, and our experience only serves to assure us of their existence; one should think that the same powerful Being who established those laws, has full right to annul, or suspend, or alter them, in what particular instances his infinite wisdom and goodness shall direct him. I would rather, as I hinted before, define a miracle, “ a sensible effect produced, either by the immediate power of God, or by the power of some invisible Agent, under the direction or permission of God, in suspending or altering the laws of nature, in such a particular instance, for ends and purposes suited to the nature of the Agent.” And conceiving this notion of a miracle, we are directly led to apprehend, that, in the

the nature of things, the production of a miracle, is full as easy for God (if in relation to a Being omnipotent, one may speak so) or for those invisible Agents he may be pleased to employ or permit, as it is for a man to produce the most common and ordinary effect. When, therefore, we consider the nature of things, or compare the power and the effect together, we cannot but observe, that a miracle is, in itself, altogether as credible, and as well proportioned to the common belief of mankind, as any other event whatsoever. So that, from the nature of the fact, as it is a sensible effect, produced by a power equal and sufficient, we are so far from having a direct and full proof, that we have no sort of proof, against the existence of a miracle.

But here the Gentleman may be understood to make answer : " Though the Being to whom the miracle is ascribed, be almighty, yet it does not, upon that account, become a whit more probable, since it is impossible for us to know the attributes or actions of such a Being, otherwise than from the experience which we have of his productions, in the usual course of nature (f)." And can we have no knowledge of the perfections of God, but from our experience of them in the usual course of nature ! If these are the Gentleman's sentiments, (too gross, perhaps, for *Spinoza* himself) I am afraid we are too far advanced in the argument.— But I am not here to go about to demonstrate or explain the being and attributes of God. I shall only repeat what I have just now said, and here lay it down as a common maxim, that " the same almighty Being, who at first established the laws of nature, has it still in his power to suspend or alter

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(f) P. 201. Marg.

“ those laws, in what particular instances he may, “ in his infinite wisdom and goodness, judge pro-
“ per and fitting.” This, I say, is a common
maxim, obvious to the common understanding of
mankind, who are able to form any just notions
concerning the Deity. Thus far, therefore, as I
have before hinted, a miracle is, in itself, “ cre-
“ dible, and a proper object of human belief; and
“ can afford no proof from the nature of the fact,
“ against its real and certain existence.” So that
this branch of the Gentleman’s argument is without
all foundation.

Another branch is this : “ ‘Tis a miracle, (says
“ the Gentleman) that a dead man should come
“ to life, because that has never been observed
“ in any age or country. There must, therefore,
“ be an uniform experience against every miracu-
“ lous event, otherwise the event would not merit
“ that appellation.” What can here be meant by
an event’s being a miracle, because it has never
been observed in any age or country, does not lie
quite so level to my understanding. ’Tis a way of
arguing that can do little honour to this new found
argument. And indeed, if after this manner it re-
quires to be supported, no body needs envy the
Gentleman the grand discovery. But, upon what
authority does the Gentleman pretend to say, that
“ a dead man’s coming to life, has never been ob-
“ served in any age or country ?” I cannot but
think, that the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, does express-
ly declare, that such events were observed under the
reign of *Tiberius*, and in the land of *Judea*. And
how uniform soever we may now find the experience
of this age and of this country, with respect to the
steady observation of the laws of nature, yet the
same history informs us, that the experience of that
age,

age, and of that country, was frequently interrupted, and men then saw with their eyes, not for a short space of time, but for a tract of years, the laws of nature, in numberless instances, suspended and altered. And, to overthrow the credit of this history, is it sufficient, or is it only necessary for this Gentleman to stand up and pronounce, “ a miracle is an event that never happened, “ or that never has been observed in any age “ or country ; there must, therefore, be an uniform “ experience against every miraculous event.” No doubt, the Gentleman’s authority may be very considerable ; but I hope he will forgive me, if I presume to think, that the authority of the Gospel-historians is intitled to the preference.

It is true, he sets not up as an Historian, but as a Philosopher. And, in this character, I could wish he would inform me, wherein lies the strength of his argument : It is strongly reported, that, “ in such an age, and in such a country, and for such a number of years, numberless miracles were publicly wrought in the face and view of the world, “ and whereof mankind had long and full experience : ” But, (says our Philosopher) there is an uniform experience against every miraculous event, for that no miracle has ever been observed in any age or country.” This, I confess, is an argument ; but, if I am not greatly mistaken, it is what Philosophers use to call, *a begging the question*, which they always incline to treat with neglect and contempt.

Hitherto we have met with nothing that seems capable of recommending this argument to the wise and learned. We have only seen, with what absurdity the Gentleman assures the world, that, from the nature of the fact itself (in whose stead he plainly substitutes

substitutes a circumstance) there arises a direct and full proof against the existence of any miracle; and that a miracle is an event, that has never been observed in any age or country. But, perhaps, I may be doing the Gentleman an injustice, from my not rightly apprehending his sentiments. And, I confess, when I look into them more narrowly, they seem to shew themselves in this other light.

The Gentleman, indeed, first observes, that " a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature ; " But then, he is pleased immediately to tell us ; " it is a miracle that a dead man should come to life ; " because that has never been observed in any age or country." So that from the reason, or rather the circumstance, here assigned, upon which such a particular event would be esteemed a miracle, one cannot but judge, that, in his view of things, the true definition of a miracle is this ; " It is an event that never happened, or has never been observed in the world." And, in his opinion, so essential to the nature of a miracle, or so necessary to the constituting of any such event as can be called a miracle, is this very circumstance of its " having never been observed in any age or country ; that otherwise (says he) or should that event come to happen, or to be observed in the world, it would not then merit that appellation. The consequence therefore is unavoidable, there must be an uniform experience against every miraculous event ; " or, no man in any age or country, can pretend, that any miracle ever came within the compass of his experience. Thus, we see, that, upon settling his notions, after his own way, and framing his definitions, as he would have them, concerning miraculous events, the Gentleman is able to demonstrate, that no miracle ever had, or can have an existence ;

existence ; thereby giving an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion. And, after the same manner, may any one demonstrate any thing.

Had *Aristodemus* in *Xenophon* been so fortunate as to have prevented the Gentleman in the discovery of this mighty argument, and under its influence maintained the cause of Atheism against *Socrates*, with great ease, might he have confounded that Philosopher, by telling him, " a Deity is a Being that " never had, and never can have an existence : " And so essential to the nature of a Deity, is this " particular of non-existence, that should such a " Being come to exist in the universe, he would " not merit that appellation. There must, therefore, be an uniform assurance against the existence of a Deity ; or, no man, in any age or " country, can pretend, that such a Being ever " came within the compass of his knowledge." This, in my apprehension, is the Gentleman's argument. And whatever the wise and learned may judge of it, I really think there is neither more nor less in it. But possibly, in looking back upon the steps whereby we are led to it, one may come to have a more favourable view of it. Let this, therefore, be another branch of this mysterious argument.

" In our reasonings concerning matter of fact, " there are all imaginable degrees of assurance, from " the highest certainty to the lowest species of moral evidence. A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence. In such conclusions as are founded on an infallible experience, " he expects the event with the last degree of assurance, and regards his past experience as a full " proof of the future existence of that event. In " other cases he proceeds with more caution : He " weighs

" weighs the opposite experiments : He considers
 " which side is supported by the greatest number of
 " experiments : To that side he inclines with doubt
 " and hesitation ; and when at last he fixes his
 " judgment, the evidence exceeds not what we
 " properly call probability. All probability, then,
 " supposes an opposition of experiments and observa-
 " tions ; where one side is found to overbalance
 " the other, and to produce a degree of evidence,
 " proportioned to the superiority. A hundred in-
 " stances on one side, and fifty on another, afford
 " a very doubtful expectation of any event ; tho'
 " a hundred uniform experiments, with only one
 " contradictory one, does reasonably beget a very
 " strong degree of assurance. In all cases, we must
 " balance the opposite experiments, where they are
 " opposite, and deduct the lesser from the greater,
 " in order to know the exact force of the superior
 " evidence (g)." Now, upon these principles, the
 Gentleman proceeds thus :

" Our assurance, (says he) as to the real exist-
 " ence of matters of fact, is derived from no other
 " principle than our observation of the veracity of
 " human testimony, and of the usual conformity of
 " facts to the reports of witnesses (b). And as it
 " is from the concurrence of both these, that we
 " judge of the truth and reality of events, so our
 " belief of them, or our admitting or rejecting
 " them, must always be governed by our experi-
 " ence of that concurrence. Thus, if the con-
 " junction betwixt any particular kind of report,
 " and any kind of objects, has been found, in our
 " experience, to be constant and invariable, as
 " there is here no opposition, we can have no hesi-
 " tation

(g) P. 175.

(b) P. 176, 177.

" tation concerning such events, but must necessarily conceive the strongest assurance of their existence. But when the facts attested are such as have seldom fallen under our observation, here there is an opposition ; events do not commonly happen so ; we therefore hesitate ; and, balancing things together, our belief must be proportioned to the frequency of our experience in observing such events, and their connection with the reports of witnesses. But supposing the facts to be such, whereof we never had any experience ; as in such instances, we never have observed the conjunction betwixt such sort of reports, and such sorts of objects, the whole weight of our experience lies against them ; we have no one instance of such events ; the instances on the other side are infinite ; which cannot, therefore, but command the whole of our assurance : And, applying this to the case of miracles, whereof we have no degree of experience, if with those instances, wherein some people pretend miracles, we compare those others, of the same class of things, wherein our experience assures us, there is no miracle, the latter will quite annihilate the former. So that, instead of admitting the truth of any miraculous events, or giving credit to the testimony that would establish them, we must settle in this general conclusion, *No testimony for any kind of miracle can ever possibly amount to a probability, much less to a proof (i).* Nay, a miracle supported by any human testimony, is more properly a subject of derision than of argument (k)." This is the Gentleman's reasoning. And, so far as I am able to understand it, the whole of it comes to this,

(i) P. 198.

(k) P. 195.

the Author of the *Essays Moral and Political* never had the experience of any miraculous events ; and therefore, never did such events happen in the world. I am apt to think, that, upon the face of this argument, every man sees its refutation. But, as if its fallacy lay deeper, and were not so easy to be discerned, I shall here pay it a little more regard. The argument, then, is this :

We, the men of this age, having all the experiments that 30, 40, or 60 years can afford us, for the stability of the laws of nature, and that in no instance they have suffered any alteration from the interposition of any invisible Agent, but have gone on, always uniformly producing their proper effects ; if we lay all these numberless experiments in the balance, against those others, wherein the men of the Apostolical age do affirm, they saw the laws of nature suspended or altered, the former will infinitely outweigh the latter ; or, if we subtract the lesser number from the greater, “ this subtraction “ (as the Gentleman expresses it) will amount to an “ intire annihilation.”

This, I say, is the reasoning that must break the credit of the God-miracles, and for ever ruin their authority. And, no doubt, if we compare the numbers on each side, I mean the numbers of instances, wherein the laws of nature have been uniformly preserved, and the number of instances, wherein, it is said, they have been suspended or altered ; the one will bear no sort of proportion to the other, but in the comparison must totally evanish. But where matters of fact are absolutely independent, and have each of them their own proper and separate existence, without in the least clashing or interfering together, how extravagantly absurd is it to go about to settle their real truth and certainty, by forming

forming a comparison of abstracted numbers? It is confessed, that the number of dead men, such as *Matthew, Mark, &c.* who, by the laws of nature, have remained in the unrelenting hands of death, is infinite. But what concernment have those instances, how numberless soever, with the case of *Lazarus*, or what opposition can they possibly bear to the resurrection of this man, who was called back to life, by a power equal to the effect? In all the other instances, beyond number, wherein no superior Being interposed, the laws of nature prevailed: But here in this event, no ways connected with any of the former, those laws are suspended, or a power above them is exerted. I shall illustrate this article by taking notice of some events, which, if they are not miracles, may well be called prodigies, as therein the laws of nature have been strangely interrupted, or have amazingly deviated from their common course; and which, in the nature and reason of things, seem far more inexplicable, than the production of any miracle, and are much less proportioned to human belief (?).

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(?) From the nature and reason of things, can the Gentleman explain the possibility of this amazing event, and recommend the existence of such a monster to our belief? Or, because he never saw an instance of the kind, and cannot therefore here perceive the conformity of facts to the report of witnesses; does he deny its existence, which is attested by many eye-witnesses of credit and honour?

Circa hæc tempora, monstrum novi generis in Scotia natum est, inferiore quidem corporis parte specie maris, nec quicquam a communi hominum forma discrepans: umbilicum vero supra, trunco corporis ac reliquis omnibus membris geminis, et ad usum et speciem discretis. Id rex diligenter et educandum et erudendum curavit; ac maxime in musicis, qua in re mirabiliter profecit. Quin et varias linguis edidicit, et variis voluntatibus duo corpora secum discordia dissentiebant: ac interim litigabant cum aliud

Within the compass of my experience, there is an infinite number of instances, wherein the laws of nature have been ever steady and uniform, in the production of human creatures. But I am told, there are instances wherein those laws have been mightily disturbed in their regular course; and human creatures have been produced, some with one head and two bodies; and others with one body and two heads. How, then, shall I satisfy myself as to the truth of such extraordinary events confidently reported? Here, indeed, some people may pretend to say, that even those very uncommon and extraordinary events may be rationally accounted for, as “ they are not contrary or repugnant to the real “ laws of nature, but only out of the usual course.” Upon which, a very good friend of the Gentleman’s, and whom he certainly reckons among the wise and learned, will give us to understand, that, at this rate, “ we make the uniform and settled “ course, and the real laws of nature, two different “ things. Thus, (says he) we argue without any “ foundation, either from sense or reason; all which “ inform us, that it is impossible for such monsters “ to come into being: To believe it possible, con-
“ tradicts

aliud alii placeret: interim velut in commune consultabant. Illud etiam in eo memorabile fuit, quod, cum inferne crura lumine offendarentur, utrumque corpus communiter dolorem sentiret; cum vero superne pungeretur, aut alioqui læderetur, ad alterum corpus tantum doloris sensus perveniret: quod discrimen etiam in morte fuit magis perspicuum. Nam, cum alterum corpus complures ante alterum dies extinctum fuisset, quod superstes fuit, dimidio sui computrificente, paullatim contabuit. Vixit id monstrum annos viginti octo; ac decepsit, administrante rem Scoticam Joanne Prorege. Hac de re scripsimus eo confidentius, quod adhuc superfunt homines honesti complures, qui hæc viderint. Buchan. Hist. lib. 13. cap. 7.

" contradicts this maxim, that nature is steady and uniform in her operations (*m*)."

But the question is not here, concerning the inward possibility of events, or how far they are capable of being explained. In this view, I have already said, and I again repeat it, It appears to me, that such prodigies are, in themselves, far more inexplicable than the production of any miracle, and much less proportioned to human belief. The question is, as I have no experience of any such events, and never have observed the connection betwixt such sort of report, and such sort of objects, how shall I settle my belief as to the reality of their existence? If, according to the Gentleman's reasoning, I balance the numbers of experiments on both sides; such is the disproportion, that my experience is infinitely superior, and must therefore lead me, with no less assurance, confidently to aver, never had such monstrous births an existence. But what influence has my experience here in *Britain*, how equal and uniform soever, over the experience of the people in *Muscovy*, whose experience has been interrupted, and in some instances informed them of the real existence of such prodigies? Indeed if our experience wholly related to the same particular objects, and a thousand of one side, from their experience, should declare, that such a particular event, in such particular circumstances, never happened; and fifty on the other side, from their experience, should as positively declare, that that event, in those circumstances, did actually happen:

Here

(*m*) The Resurrection of Jesus considered, &c. p. 75. where the Author's reasoning is against the existence of miracles; but as it equally disproves that of monsters, I have here set it in that light.

Here, (could such a case exist) as those experiences are not only different, but opposite, and cannot, therefore, but mutually affect each other; we may follow the Gentleman's rule, and, all other things being equal, " deduct the lesser number from the greater, in order to know the exact force of the superior evidence." But, I say, where people's experience manifestly concerns matters of fact absolutely different, having no sort of connection together, and capable of existing, as a man and a horse do, separately and independently: How is it possible, in such instances, for one man's experince to destroy that of another? In the case of *John, Peter, Thomas,* and in all other instances, experience assures me, that men are formed in the womb, and come into the world, only with one head: And would mankind bear with me should I boldly pronounce, this experience of mine destroys that of *M. Duvernoi*, in the case of a child, which his eyes saw and his hands handled; and is a direct and full proof, that " that learned and ingenious Gentleman never did dissect a human creature with two heads at *Petersburgh* (n)?" No less presumptuous is that man's language, who takes upon him to assure the world, his eyes never saw a miracle; and therefore, all those miracles talked of in the Gospel, are renowned lies! A mighty champion this! who blusters so loud, and swaggers so daringly against the religion of his country.

But this argument, pursued as it ought to be, will carry the matter a little further, and discredit the evidence of one's own senses. We have already seen, that, in the Gentleman's way of reasoning, the experience of other people, or their attestation of

(n) Vid. Comment. Petropolit. tom. III. p. 177, 188.

of matters of fact, cannot possibly stand, but must of course fall to the ground; especially in those instances, wherein the laws of nature have been either preternaturally interrupted and diverted, or supernaturally suspended or altered, and whereof we ourselves have had no experience: Because those instances, wherein our experience assures us, the laws of nature have been uniformly preserved, being infinitely more numerous than those other instances, wherein other people alledge, they have been interrupted, suspended or altered; if we balance those numbers together, the lesser comes to be nothing in comparison to the greater. Now, by the same train of reasoning, a man's own experience cannot fail, in some instances, to annihilate itself. Thus, in numberless instances, experience informs me, that men are brought into the world with two arms. But one instance there is, wherein, I shall suppose, I saw a man born without arms (o). Here then, in the Gentleman's way of concluding things, “is a contest of two opposite experiences, of which “the one destroys the other, as far as its force goes, “and the superior must operate upon the mind, by “the force that remains (p).” Which, in this case, being infinite, or beyond all comparison, cannot but annihilate this single instance of a man's being born without arms.

After the same manner must this argument prevail against the reality of all miracles, whereof any man can imagine he has the experience. For as, beyond question, the number of instances wherein experience makes him confident, the laws of nature have been preserved in their regular and usual course, infinitely exceeds that number, wherein he has seen those

(o) Vid. Ibid. tom. VI. p. 249.

(p) P. 179.

those laws suspended or altered ; so judging of the truth of events, from considering how abstracted numbers, like Algebraic quantities, come to extinguish one another, he cannot but regard the few miraculous events he has seen, as mere nothing, or void of all reality : So that this sort of reasoning against the existence of miracles, fairly reduces people to disbelieve, not only the testimony of other people, but that of their own senses. Whether this Gentleman means that his argument should be carried thus far, I shall not say. But the other Gentleman, whom I was attending in the preceeding Section, is not far from avowing openly, that in the matter of miracles, “ he would not believe his “ own senses.” However it be, Mathematicians themselves seem to think, that an argument leading people to an absurdity, is a demonstrative proof of the truth of the contrary proposition.

Thus, having considered the steps whereby the Gentleman leads us to his argument, and that seem to be the foundation upon which he builds it ; it is still apparent, that “ a miracle is an event in itself “ credible ; easy for a superior Being to produce ; “ proportioned to human belief ; and against the “ existence of which, no argument can be drawn “ from the nature of the fact, or from the common “ experience of mankind.”

I am sensible, that, upon an argument, which in so plain a manner betrays itself, or whose fallacy lies so bare and open, I have dwelt too long. But, as in our present melancholy situation, a great many of mankind, especially of what they call, *the genteeler world*, seem now to be quite sick of the religion of the Gospel, as an institution too pure and refined for their gross sordid appetites, and too noble and exalted for their mean trifling pursuits ; and are therefore

therefore mighty fond of every Writer on the side of Scépticism and Infidelity, admiring those infidel Gentlemen as their great Deliverers, who are come to knock off their fetters, and to turn them loose amidst their “many foolish and hurtful lusts, “ which drown men in destruction and perdition;” I was willing to set this argument in every light, that those unhappy persons might see, if they will attend to any thing that would rectify their follies, how shamefully they are bubbled in trusting an argument, that vainly pretends to ruin the credit of all miracles. And, for the same reason, I beg leave to proceed a little further, and consider those presumptions, which the Gentleman tells us, every man must have against the truth of miracles.

But, before I enter upon this, I must here distinguish betwixt a man’s notions and apprehensions concerning a matter of fact, and the existence of that matter of fact itself, attended with all its circumstances of credibility, that can recommend it to the belief of mankind. Let it then be observed, that, as to people’s notions and apprehensions concerning a matter of fact, and their belief or disbelief of its reality, most certain it is, those notions may be formed, and in numberless instances they are formed, according to the passions or prejudices the mind happens to be under, when people go about to judge of the event, whereby one may be led to reject a certain truth, or to embrace a downright falsehood. But as certain it is, that independently of our notions, and of any judgment we form of it, every matter of fact has its own proper existence, and is attended with its own particular circumstances of credibility, that make up the peculiar evidence upon which it can acquire any credit or authority among mankind. Let other facts,

facts, therefore, of the same denomination, be found to be manifest forgeries, and let us think of them with all the contempt possible; our immediately concluding from thence, that such another particular fact offered to our belief, is no better, without attending to the particular situation and circumstances of that fact, upon which alone one can judge of the truth of its existence, is most absurd and irrational. I say, let us think of matters of fact what we will, let us judge of them right or wrong, still they are in themselves independent; and our notions concerning them can have no influence over the reality of their existence, or the truth and importance of those circumstances, whereby only one can be led to perceive their credibility, and to which alone a lover of truth directs his attention, as every thing else is altogether foreign, absolutely frivolous, and quite beside the purpose.

Now, as for those presumptions, which, in the Gentleman's opinion, every thinking man must have against the truth of miracles, we are told; "There is a strong propensity in human nature towards the extraordinary and the marvellous, which ought reasonably to beget a suspicion against all relations of this kind (*q*)."
"But, if the spirit of religion joins itself to the love of wonder, there is an end of common sense; and human testimony, in these circumstances, loses all pretensions to authority (*r*)."
And, no doubt, as the Gentleman observes, "The many instances of forged miracles, and prophecies, and supernatural events, which have either been detected by contrary evidence, or which detect themselves by their absurdity, put it beyond question, that, at least, the herd

" herd of mankind are, in some circumstances, abundantly foolish and credulous, and have been shamefully cheated." But, because the generality of mankind have some passions, that " incline them to the believing and reporting, with the greatest vehemence and assurance, all religious miracles," does it therefore follow, that our assurance from human testimony, in any kind of miracle, wherein religion is concerned, must be extremely diminished?

There is, unquestionably, in human nature, a strong passion to be entertained with things uncommon and extraordinary, of which not only some Travellers take advantage, but Jugglers and Tumblers, and such sort of idle, insignificant creatures. But as to miracles, events wherein superior Beings are understood to be concerned, mankind do not seem to have a prevailing passion, that universally inclines them to believe and admit such events. It is only among the superstitious, possibly the bulk of our species, a set of people, in their notions of religion, always weak, fearful, and credulous, that we find such a propensity. As for the rest of mankind, who have a just understanding of the Deity, and follow the spirit of religion ; these are under no ready disposition to believe miraculous events ; nor do they incline to admit them but very cautiously ; they are strangers to credulity, and must therefore feel the power of a thorough, rational conviction. I confess, it is an article of the Gentleman's creed, (for those people too, have their creeds, made up, indeed, of the profoundest mysteries) that " the spirit of religion, when joined to the love of wonder, destroys all the remains of common sense," which otherwise might be left us. But the representing the spirit of religion as worse than this weak, silly passion, the love of wonder, and as completing the ruin

ruin of common sense, has something in it so unmanly, so wild and uncouth, that one must wonder, what sort of spirit our Infidel Gentlemen would introduce and propagate in the world, had they the forming and the direction of mankind. *True religion, and undefiled before God,* is animated with a spirit that ennobles and elevates the common sense of mankind, and that exalts the human mind to a participation of the divine nature. And such a spirit, I am confident, can be subject to no blind passion for miracles, nor is it capable of being led away by the idle reports of such events. It comes from God, and it knows God, and it *tries the spirits whether they are of God.* It is, therefore, I say, the spirit of superstition, that inspires people with the love of wonder, and that makes them credulous in believing miracles. At the same time, how credulous and forward soever the superstitious part of the world may be said to be, in believing and reporting, with the greatest vehemence and assurance, all religious miracles; it is to be observed, that this powerful bias, whereby they are swayed, always leans strongly towards those miracles, that seem to favour and support that scheme of religion, to which a man is already devoted; and is rather a strong bar against the belief of those other miracles, that would justify another, or a contrary set of principles. So that all religious miracles, without distinction, can never meet with equal reception.

But, in the matter of miracles, let the credulity and superstition of the generality of mankind be what it will, how can this abate our assurance, from human testimony, in every kind of miracle? To be sure, the strangeness of such events, and the proneness that mankind have to entertain and propagate reports of that nature, ought, by all means, to prevent

vent our being rash and forward, and make us very cautious and wary how we admit the truth of any miracle. But, as every miracle offered to our belief, must be of such a determined nature, must have its own separate existence, and be attended with its own particular circumstances, upon which alone its credit, or our assurance of its existence, must be founded; if with circumspection and exactness we enter into the examination of any miracle, and upon a fair and impartial view of its nature, and of all its circumstances thoroughly canvassed, we clearly perceive its credibility, or that, according to all the laws of good arguing in such cases, it is a proper object of human belief; it is impossible for me to imagine, what can here, in the least, diminish our belief, or prevent our having full assurance, as to the truth and reality of such a miracle. No doubt, whilst we are examining into the truth of a miracle, if we carry along with us our apprehensions, concerning the propensity of mankind to the extraordinary and marvellous, and that many false miracles have been imposed upon the world; and if, without regarding those apprehensions, only as cautions to prevent our being forward and inconsiderate, and to engage us to keep a strict guard, that nothing may be admitted but upon strict and rigorous inquiry, we suffer them to hang a bias upon our minds, whereby we are led to apprehend things, not in their own, but in a false light; in this case, indeed, the miracle may appear to us as a forgery, and come therefore to be rejected. But this manifestly arises from our mistaking things, or our not perceiving them as they really are, and our suffering our prejudices to pervert and mislead our judgment. Whereas, I say, whilst we carefully attend, only to the nature of the miracle, and its particular circumstances,

stances, from which alone the real truth can be discerned, as we are not here biased by any foreign consideration, there is nothing that can possibly abate or weaken our assurance of its existence. The nature and circumstances of past facts, are in themselves unalterable ; and, if we form our judgment upon them, our assurance must always be the same, steady and uniform.

I am prone to think, that this propensity in the bulk of mankind easily to believe prodigies and miracles, takes its rise from a prior disposition in human nature, whereby we are led to believe the existence of superior Beings, who concern themselves with mankind, and interpose in human affairs. For where people are of opinion, there is no God, or no Providence, or that this complexion of things, whose actions are all fatally produced by necessary, immutable laws, is God ; one must conceive a miracle absolutely impossible. Now this disposition, which makes it so easy for us to believe the existence of superior Beings, from whence that other propensity towards the belief of miracles is derived, has, in fact, led mankind into the belief of a great number of false deities. And, as from this propensity of mankind to acknowledge superior Beings, and their having been thereupon betrayed into the belief of a multiplicity of false gods ; no man can argue, that our assurance concerning the being and perfections of the true God, must be mightily impaired ; so, as little can it be pretended, that our assurance as to any kind of miracle must be extremely diminished, because the generality of mankind, or the superstitious part of our species, have a strong propensity to believe miracles, and, in numberless instances, have been grossly imposed upon. Every truth and every matter of fact, as I have often observed,

served, being supported, each by its own proper evidence, which, independently of us, and of our prejudices, is, in itself, always fixed and unchangeable, our assurance grounded on that evidence can suffer no diminution.

In the next place, we are told ; “ It forms a very strong presumption against all supernatural and miraculous relations, that they are always found chiefly to abound amongst ignorant and barbarous nations (s).” And what are those miraculous relations ? Why truly, they are “ Battles, revolutions, pestilences, famines, and deaths; which (says the Gentleman) in the first histories of all nations, are never the effects of those natural causes, which we experience ; but are always regarded as supernatural events.” So that “ Prodigies, omens, oracles, judgments, quite obscure and overshadow the few natural events that are intermingled with them (t).” Whether these observations of the Gentleman are well founded, or how far he may be pleased to allow Providence to interpose in bringing about and directing such events, it does not concern my argument to inquire. I would only here observe, that whatever has been, or may be, the propensity of the bulk of mankind to ascribe battles, revolutions, pestilences, famines, and deaths, to an extraordinary interposition of Providence, or of superior Beings ; it is impossible, as I have already explained, that this can, in any degree, lessen our assurance from human testimony, in every kind of miracle. Nor does the Gentleman here alledge, that those events, mentioned, as he says, under such a notion, in the first histories of all nations, are mere forgery ; in themselves they are true and certain ; he only condemns people’s opinions in such cases, or

(s) P. 186.

(t) P. 187.

281. 9 (n)

he blames those ignorant and barbarous nations for regarding such events as supernatural or miraculous. "For (says he) as we advance nearer the enlightened ages of science and knowledge, we soon learn that there is nothing mysterious or supernatural in the case, but that all proceeds from the usual propensity of mankind towards the marvellous and extraordinary." So that the world, now enlightened, no longer follow the propensity of their nature, and attribute battles, revolutions, pestilences, famines, and deaths, to a particular interposition of Providence, but to the established, or, as they call them, the blind laws of Nature. And, as such events are still happening, though not attended with an opinion of their having in them any thing miraculous; if it is not that he chuses to step aside, in order to pass a compliment upon the religion of his country, I know not with what good sense or propriety the Gentleman subjoins the following reflections:

"'Tis strange, a judicious Reader is apt to say, upon the perusal of these wonderful Historians, that such prodigious events never happen in our days. But 'tis nothing strange, I hope, that men should lye in all ages. You must surely have seen instances enow of that frailty. You have yourself heard many such prodigious relations started, which, being treated with scorn by all the wise and judicious, have at last been abandoned, even by the vulgar. Be assured, that those renowned lyes, which have spread and flourished to such a monstrous height, arose from like beginnings; but, being sown in a more proper soil, shot up at last into prodigies almost equal to those which they relate (*u*)."
The Author of this language cannot

cannot but know, how rudely it must grate upon every Christian ear, and that the reproaching one's religion in so abusive a manner is very apt to provoke human passions. But the religion of the blessed *Jesus*, which is here so grossly reviled, commands all his Disciples to *be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but, contrarywise, blessing*. I shall therefore only say, no man that has not been educated in *Billinggate*, ought to usurp the rhetoric of those quarters ; it greatly misbecomes a Gentleman ; nor can the pure love of truth ever come to express itself in so foul a dialect. In short, the religion of one's country, a religion that in the fullest and strongest manner, adopts and enforces all the laws of righteousness ; and which, in a course of strict inquiry and cool reasoning, men of the finest parts and learning have examined and defended, has certainly a just claim to decent language and civil treatment. Possibly, after a decisive argument, that manifestly bears in it all the marks of superiority, some men may think themselves intitled to brave their adversary, and to bestow upon his baffled cause some very coarse epithets. But the Gentleman's argument is none of this sort. He only tells us, that he never, in his days, observed any such experiments in suspending the laws of nature, as are said to have happened in the days of the Apostles : And upon this, forsooth, he would have us to rest confident, that all the miracles then noised abroad, are *renowned lies !* But how comes this Gentleman's experience to have so destructive an influence over the experience of other people, and the credit of their testimony ? A miracle is a very uncommon and unusual event : And, I am apt to think, that it is only the strangeness or uncommonness of the thing, that the Gentleman here makes a reason against its existence.

istence. And is not this a manifest breach of the laws of good reasoning, nearly approaching to that sort of argument they call *a begging the question*? It is certainly no more but the making an outward circumstance, or an external denomination, a conclusive argument against the real existence of things. A noble support for so rude a charge! But to return:

The Gentleman having told us, that ignorant and barbarous nations do impose upon themselves, in attributing some events to the agency of superior Beings, which belong only to natural causes; (from whence it is ridiculous to imagine, there is any the least ground to suspect the truth of every miracle,) he proceeds to inform us, that among such sort of people, an Impostor must prove very successful in gaining credit to his delusions and forgeries. And, to assure us of this, which needs but little proof, he instances in that impudent Impostor *Alexander*, whose life is writ by *Lucian*. So that because of the frauds and intrigues of *Alexander*, the Gentleman would have us to question the miracles of *Jesus Christ*. And, in this view, might not one expect to see the delusions of that Impostor, bearing some sort of resemblance to the Gospel-miracles, recommending themselves to our belief from their own nature, and other credible circumstances? Whether this be the case, let the Reader judge.

Here is the miraculous event, upon which the whole of *Alexander's* credit is grounded. " This " infamous Impostor having found means to raise " in people's minds an expectation, that *Aesculapius* " and *Apollo* were soon to appear among them; of " this the inhabitants of a little town, called *Abonus-Wall*, came to be so much persuaded, that they " set about the building of a temple for their ser- " vice,

" vice. Here, therefore, one morning, in one of his
" extatic fits, *Alexander* appears almost stark naked
" in the *Forum*, the most public and frequented part
" of the town, tossing his hair, and uttering some un-
" intelligible words, but distinctly pronouncing *Æ-*
" *sculapius* and *Apollo*, and congratulating to the
" town, that they were so soon to have the god a-
" mong them. The noise of this uncommon event
" having brought together almost the whole town ;
" when the Impostor found himself thus attend-
" ed, he makes off directly to the temple that was
" a-building, and there, singing the hymns of *Æ-*
" *sculapius* and *Apollo*, and inviting the god to ap-
" pear, he takes a vial, and out of the mud, at the
" bottom of the ditch dug for the foundation, where
" some water was lodged, brings up an egg ; and
" calling aloud, *Now he had got Æsculapius*, he holds
" up to the view of all present a *Serpent*, the symbol
" of that god, taken out of the egg. The people
" are struck with wonder : They adore the god,
" and felicitate his arrival. Some days after this,
" when the fame of the miracle had filled the whole
" town with *Paphlagonians* from the country ; seat-
" ing himself in a couch, in a dress suited to the ho-
" nour of the god, he shows them a *huge Serpent*,
" quite tame and gentle, winding about his neck,
" with its tail upon the ground, and its head, of a
" human shape, coming from his bosom. So that
" here again the people are greatly astonished, and
" count it a mighty miracle, that the little serpent,
" in so short a time, had grown up to so vast a bulk,
" had a human face, and was quite mild and tracta-
" ble." Thus it was that *Alexander* abused the peo-
" ple into a belief, that *Æsculapius* was come among
them. And by this means having established his
own credit (for that the god was in his keeping) he

immediately opens his oracle, and gives out his Responses. And the fraud spreads, and for many years is continued.

Such, I say, were the miracles upon which *Alexander* founded his reputation, and procured credit to his delusions. And, without making any reflections upon the matter, I leave it to the Reader to judge, whether, from this case of *Alexander*, one's assurance from human testimony, in any kind of miracle, must be extremely diminished. In my apprehension, the tricks and impositions of mere jugglers and fortunetellers, than whom this Impostor was no better (and indeed he was a mighty dealer in their ware) might as well be adduced as instances, whereby to shake our belief, or abate our assurance, in the miracles of the Gospel. 'Tis really surprising, how a Gentleman, who cannot be insensible to *decorum*, can suffer himself to bring in competition things so absolutely disproportioned. And, whatever he means when he tells us, "It does not always happen, tho' much to be wished, that every *Alexander* meets with a *Lucian*, ready to expose and detect his impostures (x);" he cannot but know, that altho' *Lucian* was engaged in exposing, all he was able, the Christian revelation to contempt and ridicule; yet, however he sets up to deride some of the Christian doctrines, he never once goes about to discredit the truth of any of the miracles, or in the least insinuate, they are delusion and imposture. Nay, one may learn from *Lucian*, that "Christians were men of integrity and prudence, enemies to impostors, and ready to expose and detect their forgeries." On which account *Alexander* hated them mortally, and "laid his commands upon the people, if they would have the god propitious,

" to

(x) P. 90.

“ to stone them out of their towns (y).” As therefore common sense, free of all superstition, cannot but despise *Alexander’s* pretensions, and laugh at his story, as in itself absolutely incredible, absurd and ridiculous : So here it is that the Gentleman’s observation is mighty just and proper ; “ Fools are prone “ to believe, and industrious to propagate the delusion ; while the wise and learned are contented, “ in general, to deride its absurdity, without informing themselves of the particular facts by which “ it may be distinctly refuted (z).” This, I say, precisely suits the case of *Alexander*. But what absurdity have the wise and learned to deride in this event that happened to the Apostle *Paul* ?

And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the Barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves ; No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, tho’ he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit, they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly : But, after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said, that he was a god (a). Had such an event, in itself neither

(y) Επεὶ δὲ πολλοὶ τῶν νῦν ἔχόντων, ὥσπερ καὶ ἐκ μέδης βασίας ἀφέροντες, συνίσαντο ἐπ’ αὐτὸν, καὶ μάλιστ’ ὅσοι Επικέρυ
ἴταιροι ἦσαν, καὶ ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἐπεφώραστο ἡρέμα οὐ πατει μαγ-
γανεία, καὶ σύσκεψή τῷ δράματος. ἐκφέρει φόβητρόν τι ἐπ’ αὐτὸς,
κέγων, ἀδεων ἐμπεπλῆσθαι καὶ Χριστιανῶν τὸν Πόντον ὃι περὶ
αὐτὸς τολμῶσι τὰ κάκια βλασφημεῖν. οὓς ἔκέλευε, λιθοῖς ἐλά-
γην, ἵγε ἐδέλυσιν ἥλεω ἔχει τὸν Θεὸν. Lucian. Pseudomant.
P. 762.

(z) P. 188.

(a) Acts xxviii. 3.

neither absurd nor incredible, come into the management of an *Alexander*, who knew the devotion of mankind to *Æsculapius*, and was therefore watching an opportunity to take the advantage of that passion, with what ease and safety, even at *Athens* itself, amidst the Philosophers of that renowned mart of learning, would he have raised his reputation, and set up his Oracles? Instead of shaking off the beast into the fire, the god would have been preserved, a temple built for *Æsculapius*, the fame of his Oracles would have filled the world; nor would a *Lucian* have had it in his power to discredit the imposture. Nay rather, upon the principles then prevailing among mankind, *Lucian* might have left *Epicurus*, and become one of its most zealous votaries. But I am wandering from my subject:

I am here only concerned to observe, the proneness of the bulk of mankind, or of the superstitious part of our species, to believe things extraordinary and miraculous, wherein they have been often mistaken, or imposed upon, is no reason why we should abate our assurance in the miracles of the Gospel, whose authority, like that of all other matters of fact, must wholly rest upon their own proper evidence, independently of our passions and prejudices.

But the Gentleman goes on, and mentions another reason, which, he says, diminishes the authority of miracles. The reason is this: "There is (says he) "no testimony for any miracles, even those which "have not been expressly detected, that is not oppo- "sed by an infinite number of witnesses (b)." His meaning is, "As all religions, how different and con- "tradictory soever, do, in his opinion, pretend, each "of them to be supported by its own particular set "of miracles; so those miracles that support any par- "ticular

(b) P. 190,

"ticular system of religion, must be understood to
"be contradicted by all those other miracles, that
"support all the other and contrary systems. So
"that, for instance, the miracles of the Gospel, that
"would justify the Christian religion, are opposed,
"and have their credit destroyed, by an infinite
"number of witnesses, namely, all the other mi-
"racles that support all the other different and con-
"trary religions among mankind." This, I suppose,
is the Gentleman's reasoning, which, he is afraid, may
appear over subtle and refined. But the argument
is abundantly obvious. And, in order to prove its
strength, let all the other miracles, upon which all
the other different and contrary religions are es-
tablished, be collected together, and fairly balanced
with those of the Gospel.

Here, I hope, the Gentleman is a little more
conscientious than to propose, that we should settle
the matter by bare numbers, or give the preference
immediately to that side, upon which may stand
the highest computation in figures. I would fain
think, he will judge it highly reasonable, that ha-
ving first carefully examined into the several reli-
gions, that stand in competition; how far their
particular doctrines are consistent with the nature
and perfections of God, and are of consequence to
the good and happiness of mankind; or whether
they are capable of receiving any sort of coun-
tenance from heaven; we should then impartially con-
sider the nature and circumstances of those miracles,
whereby each system of religion pretends to be sup-
ported; how far they are in their own nature cre-
dible, and with what degrees of evidence they are
attended, and recommend themselves to the belief
of mankind. If the Gentleman will condescend to
debate the question in this method, I am in no pain
for

for the Christian revelation. Nay, if the question must needs be determined by bare numbers in computing miracles, I am willing herein likewise to join issue with him.

And I would beg to be informed ; where is that infinite number of witnesses, or of other miracles, that stand opposed to those of the Gospel ? Why, the Gentleman tells us, that the religions of antient *Rome*, of *Turkey*, of *Siam*, and of *China*, do all of them abound in miracles (c). Upon which, I cannot but observe in general, that an innocent well-meaning Reader, being told, that those different religions, as well as the Christian, abound in miracles, may be apt to expect, that, among the miracles of those religions, he will meet with numberless instances, wherein the blind, the deaf, the lame, all manner of diseased persons were cured, and the dead raised to life again. But as herein our Free-thinkers cannot but know, a man's expectations must be greatly disappointed ; Is it fair in those Gentlemen, who hate to see mankind misled, to tantalize and abuse honest-hearted people after this manner ? As for the religion of *Siam* and of *China*, I confess, I know not what they are, or upon what miracles they are founded. Nor have we any such correspondence with those distant parts of the world, as can afford us full and certain information concerning those articles. However,

They tell us, that the religion of the people of *Siam*, consists in worshipping and imitating the life of their God *Sommona-Codom*, who having past thro' a long succession of transmigrations, came at length from a man to be transformed into a god. This is their religion. But I am not aware, upon what miracles they ground it. Perhaps, when the Gentleman

(c) P. 191.

tleman comes to particulars, and to oppose the miracles of this religion, to those of the Gospel, he may be pleased to inform us, that after *Sommonokbodom*, (for so he is likewise called) "came to be
" sensible of his being a god, having one day a pa-
" sionate desire of manifesting his divinity to the
" world, by some extraordinary miracle, he immedi-
" ately found himself mounted up into the air,
" seated on a throne, which had started out of the
" earth where he stood, all sparkling with gold and
" precious stones : Upon which, the Angels forth-
" with descending from heaven, paid him the ho-
" nours and adorations due to him." What other
miracles, in the religion of the *Siamese*, the Gentleman
may think proper to mention, I know not ; but
this, methinks, is a very fundamental one.

As to the people of *China* : It is said, that *Confucius* is the Author or Reviver of their philosophy or religion, and a particular object of their worship. But I have not heard, that this Philosopher either wrought, or pretended to work miracles, upon which to establish his own mission, or the truth of his doctrines ; which he does not alledge, he had from heaven, but from the records of some wise Princes and Legislators of former ages. I confess, that, in the Annals of this nation, which, by the by, have little credit among the *Chinese* themselves, there are a great many very extraordinary things reported : But they seem not to have any relation to the establishment of any sort of religion. But, if the Gentleman will force them into his service, they are such as these : *Hoasi*, the mother of *Fobi* their first King, and who civilized that people, " having ac-
" cidentally trod in the footsteps of a Giant, and
" being environed with the rain-bow, she concei-
" ved her son, who had the head of a man, and the
" body

"body of a serpent." There are, however, among the *Chinese*, two other sects of religion besides that of *Confucius*. Of one of those sects, *Lao Kiun*, a Philosopher contemporary with *Confucius*, was the founder. But what miracles he was the Author of, I am altogether ignorant. For, I dare say, the Gentleman will not pretend, that what his Disciples report, concerning his being, as some say, eighty-one years, or, as others say, "forty years in his "mother's womb, and his coming into the world "through her side, which occasioned her death," is a miracle to be placed to his account. The other sect was introduced into *China* some hundreds of years after the two former. It came from the *Indies*, and the Author of it is the god *Fo*, the great object of their religious worship. Of this god they tell us, that hardly was he separated from his mother's womb, through her side too, at the expence of her life, but he stood upright, and measuring exactly seven paces, he pointed with one hand to the heavens, and with the other to the earth, distinctly pronouncing these words, "There is none but myself in the heaven, or on the earth, that ought to be adored." Such are the wonderful things that are reported concerning the founders of those two sects of religion in *China*. But the truth is, as I have already said, we can very little depend upon the reports we have concerning those unknown parts of the world. So that leaving the miracles of the religions of *Siam* and of *China*, till the Gentleman shall be pleased to let us know, what are the particulars he would incline to insist upon, whereby one's assurance in the miracles of the Gospel may be diminished; I shall proceed to consider, how far the other religions of antient *Rome*, and of *Turkey*, with which

which we are much better acquainted, can be understood to answer his purpose.

And what are those miracles that so much abound in the religion of antient *Rome*? It would have been highly acceptable, had the Gentleman not rested in generals, but expressly told us, what particular miracles he would here oppose to those of the Gospel. For my part, if, among his miracles, he does not count the *ancile*, the sacred shield, which came down, it is said, to *Numa* from heaven, and in memory of which they kept an yearly festival; the only miracle I know of, upon which the religion of antient *Rome* was originally founded, is *Numa's* intercourse with the goddess *Ægeria*. But, alas! however the herd of the people of that age were affected with such miracles, wise men saw into the artifice (d); and now especially, it is well understood, that as there never were in the universe any such beings as the goddess *Ægeria*, those miracles could be only the contrivance of Statesmen and Politicians. There were indeed many events, some of them beyond all credibility, which the *Romans* regarded as omens and prodigies: But all the concern their religion had with such events, was only to prescribe what particular rites should be observed in expiating those prodigies, and in appeasing the gods. Nor can it enter into any man's head to imagine, that they rested the truth of their religion, or the certainty of its having come from heaven, upon the raining of flesh, or of blood, or of stones, upon a cow's speaking, or bringing forth a colt instead of a calf, and such other strange events real and pretended. But besides those prodigies, which, with the failing of people's credulity, came to fail in their credit and to be neglected (e); there were other events, which the *Romans* did likewise

consider as miracles, and which, it may be apprehended, served to assure them of the divinity of their religion. And, as the Gentleman is pleased to oppose the Popish as well as the Heathen miracles to those of the Gospel; and the Heathen worship and ceremonies seem, in a great measure, to be preserved and continued in the Popish; I shall here, as I go along in observing some particulars relating to the religion of antient *Rome*, take notice of what may appear correspondent in the religion of modern *Rome*; by which means, the Reader may be helped to a fuller view of the real value of our Popish miracles.

In *Numa's* institutions there were no images of the gods set up in their temples to be worshipped or adored by the people. To shape and fashion the gods, and thus to worship them, that wise Prince judged highly absurd, and quite unsuitable to the nature and dignity of divine Beings. And this wise constitution was religiously observed, as *Plutarch* reports, for the space of an hundred and seventy years (*f*). But human nature always affecting some sensible objects of worship, and designing men finding their interest in flattering the superstitious passions of mankind; images were introduced, and once introduced, they soon came to be miraculous, shewing the residence of the divinity they represented, in complaining of what they found offensive (*g*); or, in expressing their approbation of what to them was agreeable; or in portending the approach of some

public

(*f*) *Plut.* in *Num.* p. 65.

(*g*) The story of the murder of *Servius Tullius* is well known. This is the language of his image:

Vultus abscondite nostros,
Ne natæ videant ora nefanda meæ.

Ovid. Fast. I. 6. § 615.
Net

public calamity, by their weeping, or their falling into a sweat, or their dropping with blood (b) : And what is fully as wonderful, they had likewise among them some images, not made by mortal hands, but come down immediately from Jupiter (i). Events abundantly miraculous ! And the Gentleman may tell the world, whether these are the miracles which he would compare with those of the Gospel.

Certain it is, that the church of *Rome*, imitating, one should think, the Heathen, or meaning to show, that the images of Christian Saints are not inferior to the images of Heathen gods, have a great many miraculous images, that have been observed likewise

Nec minus voluntarius Junonis in urbem nostram transitus.
Captis a Furio Camillo Veis, milites jussu Imperatoris simulacrum Junonis Monetæ, in urbem Halaturi, sede sua movere conabantur. Quorum ab uno per jocum interrogata dea, an Romanum migrare vellet, Velle se respondit. Hac voce audita, latus in admirationem versus est. Jamque non simulacrum, sed ipsam cœlo Junonem petitam portare se credentes, læti in ea parte montis Aventini, in qua nunc templum ejus cernimus, collocauerunt. Val. Max. I. 1. cap. 8.

Having told us, that the image of Fortune is said to have spoke twice to this purpose ; Θεοφίλει μη θεσμῷ γυραῖνες, δέδοχατε ; Plutarch, as a Philosopher, is of opinion, that 'tis impossible for any image to speak ; but he reckons it very possible for images to sweat, to weep, and to shed blood. In Coriolan. p. 232.

(b) Cumis in arce Apollo triduum ac tres noctes lacrimavit. Liv. lib. 43. § 13.

Cœlestes minæ territabant, quoniam humore continuo Fumanus Apollo sudaret. Flor. I. 2. cap. 8.

Signa Lanuvii ad Junonis sospitæ cruento manaveré. Liv. lib. 23. § 31.

(i) Αὐτὸ μὲν τὸ ἄγαλμα διοπτεῖς, ὡς λέγουσιν ὅτε τὴν ὕλην, ὅτε τεχνητῶν ὃς τις ἐποίησεν, καὶ δὲ φανὸν χειρὸς ἀνθρωπίνης τότο δὲ παλαι μὲν εἰς ὑρανὸν κατενεχθῆναι λόγος. Herod. I. i. 35.

likewise to complain (*k*), to express themselves pleased (*l*) ; to weep, to be in a sweat, and to shed blood (*m*) : Nor are they without their images of no human composition, but of heavenly original (*n*). And such miracles, with other articles, they make the ground upon which they go about, in general, to prove the divinity of their Christian religion, and, in particular, to justify the worshipping of Saints, and the adoration of their images (*o*).

So

An image of Minerva, as well as this of the mother of the gods, came likewise from heaven ; before which a gold lamp burning day and night, once filled with oil, wanted no supply all the year round. Pausan. lib. 1. cap. 26.

(*k*) Un religieux de cette Abbaye (à Dijon) faisant un foir sa priere devant se crucifix, la statuë de Jesu Christ, qui y étoit attachée, lui parla & lui dit : " Mon bien aimé frere, couvre " moi, afin que je ne voye pas les iniquitez de mon peuple, Trompr. des Prêtr. tom. i. p. 27.

(*l*) Feruntur et alia sacratissimæ Virginis imagines, quæ varia miracula ediderunt. In particular : Imaginem sanctæ Mariæ custodem ecclesiæ allocutam, et Alexii singularem pietatem commendasse. Durant. de rit. Ec. Cath. lib. 1. cap. 5. vid. Breviar. Fest. Mart. 7. & Jul. 17.

(*m*) In the cathedral church at Lucca, there is a crucifix, which is observed frequently to weep, to speak, and to bleed. And, in honour of this miraculous crucifix, they have stamped a piece of money, which they impiously call Jesu Christ, and thereby expose this blessed name to be continually profaned and blasphemed. Trompr. des Prêtr. tom. 1. p. 156.

Cum Judæus imaginem crucifixi contumeliose verberasset, mox sanguinis e vulneribus copiose fusi et sparsus est. Durant. de rit. lib. 1. cap. 6.

(*n*) Exstat et alia Christi Salvatoris imago Romæ, in facello five oratoria S. Laurentii, quæ Græce *άχειροτοιντος*, id est, non manu hominis facta, dicitur. Id. ibid. cap. 5.

They have from heaven many images of the Virgin. And they tell us of an image of hers, before which a candle burns for many months without wasting. Id. ibid.

(*o*) Nous adorons les images des Saints d'une adoration respective au Saint que l'image nous représente. Lcs Rais. de l'Offic.

So that here, indeed, there is a plain competition. And, as the miraculous images of Pagan and Popish *Rome* seem both of them of the same nature, and to be supported by equal degrees of evidence, they cannot but stand or fall together ; unless, perhaps, those of the church of *Rome* have it otherwise in their power to satisfy the impartial world, that their miraculous images are certain and real, whilst those of the Heathen are deceit and imposture.

But as mankind, having once forsaken the paths of truth, can meet with no bounds to restrain their wandering, but go still on in endless and infinite deviations ; so *Numa* having admitted a plurality of gods, the *Romans* went on increasing the number ; which, not to mention other motives, their religious policy, in what they called the evocation of the enemies gods, seems to have made indispensibly necessary (*p*). In short, not only the public state in peace and war, but private families, every particular class of men, all individuals at home and abroad, by land and sea, in their serious affairs, in their diversions, in their virtues and vices, in health and sickness, when safe and in danger, in all circumstances of life, had their particular gods, to whom they might address themselves as their special guardians and protectors. Nay, as if the men of those days had been afraid of burdening any particular god with too much business, they parcelled out the human body
among

Offic. & Cerem. &c. par Villett, p. 87. *In the preceeding page, this Gentleman informs us that, Notre Sauveur est peint couronné d'un soleil de rayons, symbole de sa divinité : Car il n'y a creature au monde qui approche de la divinité que le soleil.* And if the sun thus represents the Deity ; why is not that luminary worshipped in the church of Rome, with this relative adoration ? The wooden images, or canvass-pictures representing their Saints, have not so good, they can have no better title,

(*p*) *Macrobius. Saturnal. lib. iii. cap. 9.*

among their deities, and allotted such a particular member of the body to the care of such a particular god, and such another particular member to the care of another (*q*). And amidst so much superstition, amidst this unbounded wildness of religious fancy, one may easily conceive a world of temples and images must have been erected. It being, however, impossible to have a temple with its proper service, for every particular deity ; besides, their setting up different altars for different gods in the same temple dedicated to another god, thereby perhaps meaning to express the friendly society among the gods, or possibly to gratify some fanciful conceit of their own ; they not only associated so many gods together, and dedicated a common temple, or a common altar to their honour (*r*), wherein their several images were placed ; but they erected *Pantbeons*, temples consecrated to all the gods, and furnished with a great number of images, having torches and incense, as in other temples, upon their altars. Nor is it to be doubted but their images were set off and enriched with the greatest profusion of dress and ornament, as one may judge from the image of *Jupiter*, whose garb and apparel, impiously robbed by *Dionysius* the Tyrant, was to the value of eighty-five talents of gold (*s*). And as they never failed to employ a great many ceremonies and a solemn form of words, in building or dedicating their temples and altars (*t*) ; so they were in use by yearly festivals to celebrate the dedication of some of them (*u*). But the Heathen had the altars and images of their gods,

not

(*q*) Cels. apud Orig. lib. viii. p. 416.

(*r*) Pausan. lib. i. cap. 34.

(*s*) Aelian. Var. hist. lib. i. cap. 20.

(*t*) Tacit. hist. lib. iv. § 53.

(*u*) Ovid. Fast. lib. i. ver. 289.

not only in their temples, but in their houses (*x*) ; in their streets (*y*) ; by the highways (*z*) ; on mountains (*a*) ; and every where all over the country : And as almost every spot of ground was thus furnished with gods, so, wheresoever they met them, or came to have them in their view, in the highways, and every where else, they were sure to pay them their devotion (*b*). And after such a manner

have

(*x*) Atque adorna ut rem divinam faciam, cum intro advenero,
Laribus familiaribus, cum auxerunt nostram familiam.

Plaut. in Rud. act. iv. sc. 6.

At ego Deos Penates hinc salutatum domum divortor.

Terent. in Phorm. act. i. sc. 5.

(*y*) Τὰ δὲ τῷ Δίος καὶ τῶν ὄντων εἰναι υπαίθρῳ—Εγείρεσθαι τὸν αὐγοράς εἰσιν Ἀθηναὶ χαλκῆ τῷ βάθρῳ δὲ οὐρῆς εἴσι Μυσῶν αὐγάλματα ἐπειρχασθέντα. Pausan. lib. ii. cap. 2, 3.

(*z*) Termine, sive lapis, sive es defossus in agro

Stipes, ab antiquis sic quoque numen habes.

Ovid. Fast. lib. ii. ver. 641.

Αἴθυναίοις δὲ καὶ εἶχω πόλεως εἰναι τοῖς δήμοις, καὶ κατὰ τὰς οδοὺς
Δεῶν εἰσιν ιερά, καὶ πύρων καὶ αὐδρῶν τάφοι. Paulan. l. i. c. 29.

(*a*) Αἴθυναίοις δὲ τὰ ὄρη καὶ Δεῶν αὐγάλματα ἔχει.

Id. l. i. c. 32.

(*b*) Ipse ducem dederat, cum quo dum pascua custos,

Ecce lacu medio sacrorum nigra favillis

Ara vetus stabat, tremulis circundata cannis.

Præstibus Maiæ Laribus videre calendæ

Aram constitui, signaque parva deum.

Causa tamen positi fuerat cognominis illis,

Quod præstant oculis omnia tuta suis.

Stant quoque pro nobis, et præsunt mœnibus urbis

Et sunt præsentes, auxiliumque ferunt.

At canis ante pedes, saxo fabricatus eodem,

Stabat; quæ standi cum Lare causa fuit?

Servat uterque domum, domino quoque fidus uterque :

Compita grata deo : Compita grata cani.

Ovid. Fast. lib. v. ver. 129.

Restitit et parvo, faveas mihi, murmure dixit

Dux meus; et simili, faveas mihi, murmure dixi.

Ovid. Met. lib. vi. ver. 325.

have matters been managed in the church of *Rome*, that one cannot well discern, how far they have receded from the religious institutions of their Pagan ancestors.

They have already admitted and canonized a great multitude of Saints, whom they regard as the patrons and protectors of nations, of cities, of families, and of particular persons, in all their various circumstances : And, as it may serve their purposes, they are still taking the opportunity to canonize others ; so that no bounds can be set to the religious objects of their worship. Every where they have particular churches dedicated to particular Saints, in which, besides that of the tutelar Saint, they have other altars for other Saints. Some Saints, likewise, they have associated together, to whom one common church is sacred. And the *Rotonda*, a church in *Rome*, the Heathen *Pantheon*, formerly consecrated to *Jove* and all the gods, now stands re-consecrated to the blessed Virgin and all the Saints (c). In all which churches they have likewise their sacred images, with their proper altars lighted with tapers, and smoaking with incense (d). Nor, in the richness of their dress and ornaments, can some of the images of the church of *Rome*, be counted inferior to those of the Heathen. The *Madonna* of *Loretto*,

in

(c) *Templum illud (Pantheon) daemonibus dicatum, Bonifacius IV. Pontifex in honorem B. Virginis, omniumque Martyrum, feliciter consecravit. Durant. de ritib. lib. i. cap. 24.*

(d) It is the doctrine of Popish Rome, that the burning of incense drives away daemons effectually : *Suffitus, seu turificatio ad fugandos daemones efficax est. Id. ibid. cap. 9.* But Pagan Rome taught the contrary, and were persuaded, that by the steams of incense their deities and daemons were highly feasted, and strongly allured :

*Illic plurima naribus duces thura. Hor. od. 1. lib. iv.
Vid. Porph. de abst. lib. ii.*

in particular, an image of wood of about four feet and an half high, its face frightfully black, and its body all over worm-eaten, by which they mean to represent the Virgin *Mary*, is always magnificently dressed out, and is possessed of a wardrobe of immense value (e). In the dedication of their churches

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and

(e) Mr. D'Emiliane happened to be present at the undressing of this image, in order to its change of habit for Sunday. His account of this extravagant piece of superstition is abundantly curious. He then tells us of the splendor of its dress, and the greatness of its riches.

On la revêtit d'un habit verd extrêmement riche. C'étoit un ouvrage à fleurs, sur un fond d'or. Le voile qu'on lui mit sur la tête, étoit encore plus précieux; car outre qu'il étoit de la même étoffe, il étoit tout semé de grosses perles fines: Après quoi on lui mit sur la tête une couronne d'or, chargée de pierres précieuses d'un prix inestimable. On lui mit ensuite son collier, ses pendans d'oreilles, et ses bracelets de diamans, et plusieurs grosses chaines d'or au col, ou étoient attachés un grand nombre de coeurs, et de medailles d'or, qui sont des présens que des Reines et des Princesses Catholiques y ont envoyéz par dévotion, pour témoigner qu'elles voulloient être esclaves de cette statuë. Tout l'ornement de l'autel étoit également somptueux et magnifique. Ce n'étoit que vases, bassins, lampes, et chandeliers d'or et d'argent enrichis de pierreries. Tout ceci, à la faveur d'une grande quantité de ciérges qui y brûlent jour et nuit, rendoit un éclat dont la beauté ravissoit l'ame par les yeux. — Les personnes riches font des grands présens à la statuë de bois de la Vierge, qui est appellée sans aucune addition ou modification la Sainte Vierge de Lorete. Ils lui donnent des colliers, et des bracelets de perles, de diamans, des coeurs d'or, des medailles, des chandeliers, des lampes, et des tableaux en relief d'or et d'argent, d'une grandeur et pesanteur prodigieuse. Plusieurs lui envoyent des anneaux, et de très-précieux joyaux pour l'épouser. Elle a plus de cinquante robes d'un prix inestimable, sans celles que l'on défait tous les jours au profit de Prêtres, lorsqu'elles lui ont un peu servi. De sorte qu'elle est aujourd'hui la plus riche catin de l'univers, et le morceaux de bois, le plus richement paré qu'il y ait dans le monde. C'est à cette statuë que furent adressées ces Litanies si fameuses, et si fort en usage dans l'église de Rome, que l'on appelle communément, les Litanies de la Vierge, ou bien, les Litanies de notre Dame de Lorete,

and altars, beside many other ceremonies so senseless and extravagant, that only the wild caprice of superstition could suggest them, they employ a considerable quantity of holy water in washing or sprinkling the altar and walls of the church; at the same time, as if the devil were in actual possession of every part of God's creation, *exorcising* the materials of which church and altar are built (*f*). And from their *Breviary*

Lorette, ou elle est appellée Reine des Anges, Mere de la Grace divine, Porte du ciel, Aide des Chrétiens, Refuge des pécheurs, &c. Tous ces precieux ornementz, et ces beaux titres n' empêchent pourtant pas les vers de faire leur office. Hist. des Tromp. des Prêtr. tom. i. p. 223.

To this image of the Queen of heaven (so they blaspheme) among the Papists, the Reader may possibly think, that the image of Jupiter the King of heaven (so they blaspheme) among the Heathen, is not an improper match: Καθέστας μὲν δὴ ὁ Θεὸς ἐν Θρόνῳ χρυσῷ πεποιημένος ἐκ ἑλέφαντος. - σέφανος δὲ ἐπί-
κειτάι ὁ τῇ κεφαλῇ, μεμιημένος ἐδάιας κλῶνας. ἐν μὲν δὴ τῇ δίξιᾳ φέρει Νίκην ἐξ ἑλέφαντος καὶ τάυτην καὶ χρυσῷ, ταινια τε ἔχυσαν, καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ σέφανον τῇ δὲ αριστῇ τῷ θεῷ χάριέν
ἐσι σκῆπτρον μετάλλοις τοῖς πᾶσιν ἡδιομένον. ὁ δὲ ὄργις ὁ ἐπὶ τῷ σκῆπτρῷ καθέμενος ἐσιν ὁ αἰτός. χρυσῷ δὲ καὶ τὰ ὑποδήματα τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ιματίον ὠσάντως ἐσι. τῷ δὲ ιματίῳ ζώδια τε καὶ τῶν αἰθῶν τὰ κρίνα ἐσὶν εμπέποιημένα. x. l. Pausan. I. viii. c. II.

This image or statue was the work of Phidias, who, after he had finished it, beseeching Jove to grant some testimony of his approbation, immediately it thundered, and the thunder struck the pavement of the temple. Whether the Popish image can pretend to any such testimony in its favour, I know not: But the house where it stands and is worshipped, is, by far more miraculous. It is, they say, the very house where the Angel Gabriel found the Virgin Mary, when he delivered to her his message from heaven, and where she lived with her Son, and her husband Joseph, for the space of thirty years. And this very house, they pretend, was, by the Angels, at the command of the Virgin, transported out of Nazareth from one place to another, till it came to rest where it now is!

(*f*) Villet. *Les Rais. de l'Office et Ceremon.* &c. p. 59, &c.

viary we learn, that they keep anniversary festivals, in commemorating the dedication of some of their churches. Neither are their sacred images confined to their churches; they have them likewise in their houses for their private devotion. And in their streets, by the highways, on rocks and mountains, in all places whether inhabited or not, they have their crosses, and the altars and images of their Saints, erected as the common objects of their religious worship, every where, as it were, near at hand, to favour and protect them; and which therefore they do not fail in some sort or other, as they happen to see them, in passing along the road, or any where else, to reverence and adore (g). Thus far, therefore, the Heathen ceremonies seem to be preserved and retained in the Popish. Only, as in my apprehension, that particular god, to which the ancient *Romans* dedicated any particular temple, was, with good reason, at least, the principal object of worship in that temple; if our modern *Romans* can pretend they follow another course, therein, I must own, they have so far departed from the practice of their Heathen ancestors. At the same time, to dedicate a church to a particular Saint, who then becomes its proper patron and protector, and yet in that very church not to pay the chief honours to that particular Saint, has something in it that appears to me very absurd and inconsistent, at least, very

(g) Hanc crucem, scilicet, ubique celebrari videre licet. In domibus, in foro, in solitudine, in viis, in montibus, in collibus, in vallibus, in mari.—Omnes de ea solliciti sunt, et ubique fulget, et sparsa est: In parietibus domorum, in culminibus, in libris, in civitatibus, in vicis, in locis quae habitantur, et quae non habitantur, sanctae imagines et cruces in publicis viis eriguntur, et nos quidem propter Deum, et puram erga Sanctos ejus fidem, sancta ejusmodi ubique erecta adoramus et salutamus. Durant. de Ritib. lib. i. cap. 6.

very rude and unmannerly. The old *Romans* had certainly a juster notion of decency. And I cannot but think, that the consecrating of churches to Saints, did, in some measure, pave the way for the worshipping of Saints and their images.

But, the Pagans of old *Rome*, so very religious in the multiplicity of their gods, and in the number of their temples and images, were no less devout and superstitious in the public acts of their worship; particularly in their supplications or religious processions, when they offered up their thanksgivings to the gods for any joyful or successful event, or were deprecating their displeasure when afflicted or threatened with any public calamity: In some of those public acts of their devotion (for they had them of many different forms) having the images of their gods along with them, they marched in solemn pomp, from one temple to another, making their proper stations by the way, clothed in long vestments, singing all the while sacred hymns, with garlands on their heads, and wax-candles or torches, and sometimes laurel-branches in their hands (*b*): They were in use likewise in some of their festivals, to expose to public view their richest furniture, and whatever they had, in art or nature, that was grand or curious, and could add lustre to the pomp (*i*). And what added greatly to the solemnity, besides their public feasts in their temples, they sometimes kept open house, when all persons, citizens and stranger, known and unknown, were made welcome; and upon such occasions, no doubt, those of higher rank would, in every instance, display their hospitality (*k*).

Such

(*b*) Liv. lib. xxvii. § 39. lib. xl. § 37. Pausan. lib. ii. cap. 7. 35.

(*i*) Herod. lib. i. § 32.

(*k*) Liv. lib. v. § 13.

Such was the conduct of the Heathen in their religious processions: And that these holy processions are still continued in the church of *Rome*, and celebrated much after the same manner, the world needs not be told. In all Popish countries one has access to see them, likewise in great variety. And, as in some of these solemnities, they are dressed in long, white garments, and sing sacred hymns, and have palms in their hands, and wax-candles and tapers, making proper stations as they march along (*l*) ; so particularly in their festival of the holy Sacrament, they make a public shew and parade of all their best furniture, they keep open house, and every body is made welcome (*m*). But how well soever Popish

(*l*) *Durant de Ritis. cap. ro. En nos processions, pour prendre haleine et courage, l'eglise fait halte, s'arreste tantost à la nef, tantost devant un autel.* Villet. *Les Rais. de l' Office. &c.* p. 530.

(*m*) *La fete du S. Sacrement ayant été instituée pour faire triompher l' Hostie en depit des Heretiques, comme disent les Papistes, ils n' oublient rien pour rendre ce jour là, et tout l' octave qui suit, plus pompeuse et plus solennelle.* — *En France l' on rend tout le dehors des maisons de belles tapisseries, on jette les rues d' herbes odoriferantes et de fleurs ; on dresse des oratoires ou reposoirs (comme ils les appellent) pour faire reposer le Saint Sacrement, comme s' il étoit bien las ; on habille un infinité de petits enfans en Anges, pour lui jeter des fleurs, et lui donner de l' encens : Enfin on fait dans les rues mille prosternations et adorations idolâtres.* — *Mais l' Italie comme la plus ingénieuse, et aussi la plus superstitieuse, l' emporte de beaucoup par dessus tous les autres païs Catholiques Romains.* Boulogne entr' autres s' y est rendue remarquable par sa fameuse octave du S. Sacrement. — *Les Boulonnais sont extrêmement curieux en peinture : Tous leurs cabinets, leurs sales et leurs chambres en sont pleines, et comme ils les produisent dans les rues cet octave là, on a la satisfaction d' y voir de fort belles pieces.* — *Les maisons des grands Seigneurs sont toutes ouvertes ces jours là, et ils font en soin de faire parer magnifiquement toutes leurs chambres, et d' y mettre en vue toutes leurs richesses.* Il y en a quelques-uns qui sont si splendides et si liberaux qu' ils donnent des rafraîchissements, qu' ils

and Pagan ceremonies may correspond and tally together in other circumstances, as their religious objects are different, the sacred things carried in their processions must likewise be different.

Thus, for example, among the Pagans, in their festival kept in memory of the *Ancile* which Numa had from heaven, the Heathen Priests, in their procession, danced along, carrying the sacred shields: And, among the Papists, in their festival celebrated in honour of a *Nail*, which, they say, is one of those nails that nailed the blessed *Jesus* to the cross, and which was last taken out of Constantine's horse-bridle, the Popish Priests, in this very solemn and splendid procession, carry the sacred Nail, appearing thro' a beautiful chrystral, mounted on a large pedestal of pure gold, exquisitely wrought, and richly adorned with precious stones, to which, as it passes along, the people *bow the knee*, and pay their adoration. Thus likewise, in place of the images of Heathen gods, carried in the Pagan processions, the church of *Rome* have in their processions the reliques or the images of their Saints, whom, at the same time, in the old *Roman* language, they still affect to call *Divi*

and *Sorbeti*, as we have seen in the former part of this book.

qu'ils appellent *Sorbeti*, à tout le monde, ou au moins aux personnes tant soit peu considérables. Et dans leurs courts, ou leurs jardins, ils ont des fontaines qui jettent du vin en abondance pour le menu peuple.— Ils font de plus des représentations de toutes les figures de l'Ancien Testament, qu'ils croient avoir préfiguré leur S. Sacrement.— Ils représentent tous les Prophètes et toutes les Sybilles qui ont prophétisé de notre Seigneur. Ils font paraître ensuite la Vierge et les douze Apôtres, et notre Seigneur qui suit avec un pain dans sa main, comme s'il le vouloit rompre comme il fit dans la sainte cène.— Apres tout cet attirail, suivent les Prêtres magnifiquement revêtus, et puis le S. Sacrement, qui est porté sous un riche dais, environné d'une infinité de jeunes garçons et de jeunes filles, habillez en Anges, qui lui jettent des fleurs. Proche du dais il y a toujours une fort bonne musique, &c. Hist. des Tromp. des Prêt. tom. ii. p. 174.— 180.

and *Divæ, gods and goddesſes*; as if they meant to make a shew of deviating in nothing from the institutions of paganism. And, indeed, so fond are they of corresponding with the Heathen in matters of religion, that, among the *Jewiſh Prophets*, personated in their procession of the holy Sacrament, they represent or personate the Heathen *Sibyls*. Upon which I must beg leave to observe, that, although in some of their religious processions, the Heathen, for sport and diversion, did personate other characters (*n*) ; yet I cannot recollect they were ever so profane (whatever liberties they might take upon the stage, and sometimes at their private entertainments (*o*),) as in such circumstances to personate their gods, as the Papists do their Saints, and even *Jesus Christ* himself, in the most outrageous and impious manner (*p*).

But

(*n*) Herodian. lib. i. § 32.

(*o*) Suet. in August. cap. 70.

(*p*) Puisque je suis insensiblement tombé sur les processions qui se font à Milan, je ne puis m' empêcher de vous faire la description d'une des plus fameuses qui s'y pratiquent la nuit du Vendredi Saint. Cela se fait aux flambeaux, dans l'ordre qui suit: Apres la croix et la banniere, suivent les porteurs de croix. Ce sont des gens qui portent de grandes croix sur leurs épaules, de la longueur de 15 ou 20 pieds.— Ils font cela par un esprit de penitence, et pour imiter notre Seigneur Jesus Christ, lorsqu'il porta sa croix au Calvaire. Ils sont bien au nombre de trois ou quatre cens; la plupart d' entr'eux ont la corde au cou, et de grosses chaines aux pieds, qui traînent sur le pavé, et font un bruit épouvantable. — Ils ont le visage caché avec de grands capuchons.— Au milieu de ces porteurs de croix, on portoit dans un brancard, une figure de notre Seigneur allant au Calvaire.

Après ces porteurs de croix suivoient les Disciplineurs. Ils avoient de même le visage couvert avec leurs grands capuchons, et ayant le dos tout decouvert, avec de grosses disciplines qu'ils tenoient des deux mains, ils se battoient continuallement, et faisoient decouler le sang de leurs épaules, d'une maniere qui faisoit horreur à la nature. On portoit de même au milieu de ces

fouetteurs,

But that which may be thought more nearly to relate to our present argument, concerns the vows, the gifts and offerings, which the antient *Romans* made to their deities. And herein we every where see the mighty influence which religion then had over all characters and what a powerful sense they entertained of their dependence upon their gods. In the case of any public undertaking, with respect to peace or war, they not only consulted the gods concerning their approbation ; but, in order to gain and secure their protection, they made solemn vows of temples, and altars, and other monuments, and valuable gifts, to be consecrated to their service and honour. And just so, under any public calamity, and in the case of prodigies, they not only consulted their sacred books, how the anger of the gods might be appeased, but they likewise made vows and offerings to conciliate their favour. Such, in relation to

fouetteurs, qui étoient en tres-grand nombre, une figure de la flagellation de notre Seigneur attaché à la colonne. Ensuite on voyoit venir plusieurs compagnies de soldats qui portoient leurs mousquets et leurs piques la pointe renversée en bas, et leurs étendarts de mème. Tous les tambours étoient couverts de drap noir, et ils les battoient par dessus le drap, ce qui rendoit un son fort lugubre. Après les soldats, suivoit une figure vivante de notre Seigneur ; c' étoit un jeune homme, revêtu d'une grande robe de pourpre, avec une couronne d'épines sur sa tête, et qui portoit une grande croix sur ses épaules. Il y avoit environ une vingtaine de garçons autour de lui, habilez en Juifs, qui faisoient cent postures et grimaces ridicules. On ne pouvoit pas s' empêcher de rire à un spectacle qui auroit dû attendrir les coeurs, parce que rarement les representations saintes chez les Papistes sont exemptes de profanation. On ne se mettoit point à genoux devant cette figure, pasce qu' elle étoit vivante. Elle étoit suivie de toutes les confrairies de la ville : Qui sont en tres-grand nombre. Ils marchoient deux à deux, avec des tierges allumez en leurs mains ; et après eux suivoit une autre figure de notre Seigneur dans le tombeau. Lorsqu' elle passa, quoi qu' elle ne fut que de bois, tout le monde se mettoit à genoux dans les rues pour l' adorer, &c. Hist. des Tromp. des Prêtr. tom. ii. p. 208.

to the gods, were the dispositions of the public, as they happened to be situated. And, after the same manner,

When private persons were about to engage in any matter which they thought of consequence, when they were to travel by land or sea, when they were in danger, or had met with any calamity, when in sickness, or in any ailment of body, or in any distress whatsoever, wanting favour or relief, for themselves or their friends, in these circumstances they made their addresses to the gods, in hopes of their protection and succour, they sent up their vows, and in acknowledgement of the protection and succour received, they made their vows effectual.

Thus, not only were temples and altars vowed and dedicated, but the temples came to be enriched with votive gifts and offerings, and to have their walls all hung with tables and pictures narrating or representing the particular favours which the gods had vouchsafed to their votaries. Nay, frequently, in the case of their being affected in any particular member of the body, when they happened to be relieved, they made the form or figure of that member in what kind of matter they judged proper; and this they devoted in testimony of their deliverance. So that one might see legs and arms, and other parts of the human body; as votive offerings to the gods, hanging up in their temples. Withal it may be observed, that as the hands, particularly, were offered up on other accounts, they do not always express, that the donor was affected in that particular member.

Of the truth of all this we are assured from ancient inscriptions, and from common history. In particular, we learn from *Cicero*, that a number of

pictures were to be seen in temples representing the deliverance, which, in answer to their vows, many people in storms at sea had obtained from the gods (q). And *Livy* tells us, that “ the temple of “ *Æsculapius* was once rich in offerings from the “ sick and diseased, in consideration of the cures “ they had received (r). ” Those offerings, however, and tables, and pictures, were not all of them the effects of vows; they were some of them, no doubt, the pure expressions of devotion ; and many of them the effects of gratitude, for the relief the gods had been pleased to afford to the distressed, by instructing them in dreams, and visions, and admonitions, how they might be relieved. Of this we have abundant proof likewise from antient inscriptions. And *Strabo* lets us know, that the temple of *Æsculapius* at *Epidaurus* was always full of sick people ; and that the walls were all hung with tables, on which the cures performed were inscribed (s). And it should seem, that, in those temples, where proper places were appointed for the purpose, they commonly spent the night, that in dreams and visions, they might be directed to a proper cure (t).

Nor

(q) *Tu, qui deos putas humana negligere, nonne animadvertis ex tot tabulis pictis, quam multi votis vim tempestatis effugerint, in portumque salvi pervenerint?* Ita fit, inquit, illi enim nusquam picti sunt, qui naufragia fecerunt in marique perierunt. *Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. 3. 37.*

(r) *Nunc vestigiis revulsorum donorum, tum donis dives erat, quæ remediiorum salutarium ægri mercedem sacraverant.* *Liv. lib. 45. 28.*

(s) *Kαὶ τὸ ιερὸν πλῆρες ἀες τῶν τεκμηρόντων, γὰρ τῶν ἀγαπημένων πινάκων, ἐν δισ ἀράγεγραμμένας τυγχάνοντιν αἱ θεαπεῖαι καθάπτερ ἐν Κῷ τε γὰρ Τρικῆ Strab. lib. 8. p. 360.*

(t) *Τὸν ναὸν δὲ ἔσι πέραν, ἐνδα ὡς οἰκέται τὸν θεὸν καθένεσσι,* *Pausan. lib. 2. cap. 27.*

Nor did they dream for themselves only, but for other people likewise, particularly in the temple of *Serapis* (*u*).

Now, all the instances of this protection and relief, which people in danger, or distress, or in other circumstances, had the folly to imagine their Heathen gods had afforded them, were counted miracles. If these, therefore, are the miracles which the Gentleman means we should compare with these of the Gospel, 'tis needless to tell the world, how far they can stand in competition. I shall here only, in the case of two blind men, give the Reader a specimen of the manner wherein these miracles were worked. And, as I have not *Gruter's Inscriptions*, I shall transcribe the first of them from *Montfaucon's Antiquities*, which I had in a present from my noble Patron the Earl of *Illy*, now his Grace *Archibald Duke of Argyll*, a distinguished ornament of his country, and a great encourager not only of learning, but of every art and manufacture that can tend to the polishing of human life, and the promoting the public interests, the common good of mankind.

The case is this;

" *Aesculapius*, by his oracle, prescribed to *Gaius*,
 " a blind man, to approach the holy altar; to sup-
 " plicate; to pass from the right to the left; to lay
 " his five fingers upon the altar; to lift up his hand
 " and put it on his eyes: Immediately he recovered
 " his sight; the people present greatly rejoicing
 " that such mighty deeds were done under our Em-
 " peror

(*u*) Κάνωβος δ' ἐστι πόλις—Ἐχεστα τὸ τῆ Σαραπίδος ἱερὸν,
 πολλὴ ἀγιστὶα τιμώμενον, καὶ θεραπέιας ἐκφέρον, ὡσεὶ καὶ της Ἑλλο-
 γιμωτάτης ἀνδρᾶς πισένειν, καὶ ἐγκομιαθεῖ αὐτὺς υπὲρ ἑαυτῶν
 ἦ ἔτερων συγράφει δὲ τινες καὶ τὰς θεραπέιας, ἄλλοι δὲ ἀρετᾶς
 τῶν ἐνταῦθα λογιῶν. Strab. lib. xvii. p. 759.

"peror Antonine." This is the most considerable miracle of those four that are inscribed in this table of *Æsculapius*. And in such instances, the learned *Montfaucon* has observed, that the devil, or rather the Priests, have found means to impose grossly upon mankind (*x*). In the mean time, this table, though it is set in that light, can be no votive offering. From the form and stile, it contains, as it were, a Physician's *Recipé*, with an account of the success of the prescription, taken down, I suppose, by the Priests, and hung up in the temple. For, in the passage a little before transcribed in the margin, *Strabo* informs us, that some people in the temple of *Serapis* were thus employed. Precisely of the same nature were those inscriptions upon some pillars, which *Pausanias* saw in the temple of this god at *Epidaurus*. They expressed the names of the sick people; what were their several diseases; and the method of their cure. And, what is very remarkable, there was there likewise a pillar a-part, with an inscription, bearing, that *Æsculapius* had raised *Hippolytus* from the dead (*y*).

The other instance of a miraculous cure performed by *Æsculapius* is this: " *Pbalyius*, a particular votary of this god, being so greatly distressed with sore eyes, that he was almost blind, *Æsculapius* appears to *Anyte* in a dream, giving her a sealed letter, which she should carry to *Pbalyius*. The dream was a reality: For, awaking, she found the letter in her hand. Upon this, therefore,

" *Anyte*

(*x*) On y voit ou les ruses du démon pour tromper les gens trop credules, ou peut être la fourberie des Prêtres des faux dieux, qui apostoient des gens pour feindre des maladies & des guérisons miraculeuses. *Montfauc.* L'antiquet. tom. 2. part. 1. Liv. 4 chap. 6

(*y*) *Pausan.* lib. 2. cap. 27.

" Anyte takes ship, and, arriving at *Naupactum*,
 " delivers the letter to *Pbalysius*, desiring him to
 " break it open and read it. To read it! This, in
 " his present condition, *Pbalysius* thought impos-
 " sible. But reflecting, that, peradventure, the
 " god had sent him something salutary, he opens the
 " letter, and looking into it, immediately his eyes
 " become whole: And the money demanded in the
 " letter, he gives to *Anyte* (z)." This the Reader
 may think a very extraordinary event. And, in-
 deed 'tis the only event, I know of, among the
 Heathen, of sending a miracle by letter. It puts
 one in mind of *Gregory Thaumaturgus*, his sending a
 written message to some devils to return to a Hea-
 then temple, out of which he had expelled them.
 I shall only add :

In such a number of deities, whereof several had,
 as it were, the same profession, or were good to the
 same purposes; and whereof some might be offended
 and others not; 'tis impossible but people must have
 been at a great uncertainty, to which of them they
 should address themselves, and make their supplica-
 tions. For this reason, therefore, guided by fancy,
 or pretending to have consulted their sacred books,
 the *Roman Consuls*, or *Decemviri*, or the *Collego*
 of Priests, &c. were wont, one or other of them,
 upon public occasions, to advertise the people, to
 what particular deities they should supplicate, and
 offer sacrifice (a). And as, in relation to their pri-

vate

(z) Ελπίζω δὲ τι ἐκ τῆς Ασκητικῆς χρησὸν, ἀφαιρεῖ τὴν
 σφραγίδα, καὶ ιδωρ ἐς τὸν χηρὸν, υγιεῖς τε ἡγε, δίδωσι τῇ Αγύτῃ τὸ
 ἐν τῇ δέλτῳ γεγραμμένον, σατῆρας διχιλίας χρυσόν. Id. lib. 10.
 cap. ult.

(a) Editi a collegio Pontificum Dii quibus sacrificaretur. Liv.
 lib. 30. § 3. Decemviri iussi adire libros: edidere quibus Dii,
 et quot hostiis sacrificaretur. Id. lib. 40. § 45.

vate concerns, every man being left to his own choice, and in such a choice having nothing to guide him but mere conceit and imagination, people could not but be as uncertain, to which of the gods they should address themselves, as their best patrons and protectors ; so when they happened in any circumstances, particularly in time of danger or distres, to come where any god had his residence, either his temple, his altar, or his image, they directly applied to that god for favour ; and if they knew him not, they addressed him under the general character of a god ; and, whoever he was, devoutly implored his protection (*b*). And, whilst people were thus at an uncertainty, as to the particular deity under whose immediate protection they should put themselves ; 'tis not to be doubted, but different Priests, not always free from the spirit of emulation, did use their endeavours to prevent each other in gaining votaries to their different deities : Which happened likewise, we may believe, in the case of the Priests of the same god, upon their having separate interests from their belonging to different temples.

Such now was the devotion of the Heathen towards their gods, and such were the favours with which it was rewarded. And, in their devotion towards the Saints and images, is not the church of *Rome* openly pursuing the same measures, and every where reaping the same advantages ? They honour their Saints with churches, and altars, and oratories, built and consecrated to their service, and visibly possessed by their images. And, as they are well assured that their Saints and their images are able to work

(*b*) *Nunc, quisquis est deus, veneror, ut nos ex hac ærumna eximat miserias ; Inopes, ærumnosas, aliquo auxilio adjuvet.* Plant. in Rud. Aet. 1. Scen. 4.

work miracles, they every where devoutly regard them as the objects of their adoration (*c*), putting up to them prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for themselves and others : In time of danger, particularly, or when they are involved in any distress or calamity, they then fervently invoke their aid and protection : They send up their vows : In visions and dreams they either have immediate relief, or they are directed how to obtain it (*d*) : They make offerings ; and they hang up, or represent in their churches, the favours or blessings which their Saints or images have been pleased to vouchsafe them.

(*c*) *Miraculis etiam imaginem veneratio illustratur. — Extra omnem controversiam est, Sanctorum imagines mirifica designare miracula, ut et debilibus valetudo bona per eos concilietur, sæpeque in somniis apparentes optima quæque nobis consulant.* Durant. de Retib. lib. 1. cap. 5.

(*d*) *Diaconus, Ebrardus nomine, febris anhelæ vexabatur æstibus; qui hujus ægritudinis agitatus angoribus, — fessus residebat, dum Missæ celebrarentur mysteria. Cui vi febrium fatigato, sopor irruit: Et ecce videt beatam dei Génetricem fibi adstantem, impo- sitaque manu ejus capiti pertransisse, et post altare se se visa est intulisse. Mox ille patefactis oculis surgit, finitisque mysteriis, jam sanus Omen respondit.* Flodoard. Hist. lib. 3. cap. 6. vid. lib. 1. cap. 24.

Quidem cæcus, nomine Paulus, admonitus in somnis, ut ad eandem pergeret ecclesiam lumen ibi recepturus, advenit; et recuperator lumine, nec mora videns abscedit. Id. ibid. lib. 4. cap. 48. vid. lib. 2. cap. 15.

I cannot but here observe, that a remedy, very much resembling that mentioned above, in the case of a blind man cured by Aesculapius, is prescribed for the tooth-ach. Here the patient is directed to prostrate himself before the altar of the B. Virgin ; to supplicate to her, with all earnestness, for pity ; then to rise up, and to kiss the altar, and upon the bare marble to lay the affected part ; after this to return home, to cover his body all over with cloaths, and to compose himself to sleep. This is the prescription. But so unfortunately were things then situated, that at the very time he was devoutly following the prescription, the Virgin herself happened not to be present at her altar. Happy therefore for the poor

them (*e*). The *Virgin Mary*, whom they stile the *Queen of Heaven, the Queen of Angels and of Men, and the Mistress of the Universe*, is indeed the prevailing object of their worship ; and in this honour she is now pretty well secured by the common use of their Rosary. But, from among such a multiplicity of Saints, whereof some are supposed more powerful in conferring one kind of blessing, and some in conferring another (*f*) ; as people are left to chuse those of them whom their own fancy may suggest to them, or from whom they may promise themselves most good or readiest protection ; so, although by their rituals they are instructed to what particular Saints they shall pay their anniversary devotions, and upon all extraordinary occasions, are advertised by their Priests, in what they call their *Prones*, who is the Saint, in the acknowledging, or in the invocating of whose favour and protection, they shall immediately address themselves in their supplications and processions ;

poor man ! the Virgin is pleased to appear to him in his sleep, and, with great compassion, having touched the affected part, she makes an apology for her absence, when he lay prostrate before her altar, and bids him rest confident, he is now cured. Sicque celerrime redditus fospitati, saepe postea fidenter adstipulabatur, non se ulterius esse passurum talia, quem tanta saluti restituisset domina. Quod et revera illi accidit, ut deinceps hujusmodi ægritudinem nequaquam fenserit, dum pluribus postmodum vixerit annis. Id. ibid. lib. 3. cap. 6.

(*e*) Pol. Virg. de Juv. Rer. lib. 5. cap. 1.

(*f*) In the dedication of his sermons, it is said of St. Borromeo, that, happy in heaven, and adored upon altars on earth, the whole church invoke his glorious and powerful protection ; but that especially the Pastors of the people have recourse to him for his support and direction in the discharge of their office, as he had therein signalized himself very particularly. Beato in cielo, e per l' eroiche virtù sue adorato in terra sopra gli altari,—la chiesa tutta ne invoca il gloriose e potente patrocinio, e i pastori de popoli a lui recorrono per esseré ajutati a ben custodire le loro greggie, fendo egli stato in questa parte segnalatissimo.

cessions ; yet, in what relates to their own private concerns, they are sometimes at a loss to know to which of their Saints they shall apply (g). And must they not herein be still at a greater loss, on account of the rivalry, which their Priests, for their own profit, have introduced among their Saints ; some pretending, that such a Saint, whose image or reliques are in their possession, has, in point of working miracles, the advantage beyond such another Saint, whose remains are in the hands of others (h) ; and even pretending, that the same Saint is more favourable, or works more or greater miracles with them, than any where else ? But, be that as it will, our Popish Saints and images have performed no greater wonders, they have afforded no better protection to their votaries, than the Heathen pretend to have received from their gods and goddesses. And of the credibility of all those miracles, hung up or represented, whether in Heathen temples, or Popish churches, every sound-headed man, having any just notion of God and of religion, must at once be sensible.

VOL. I.

T t

We

(g) Here is a pretty odd conceit, in order to find out, which is the Saint one had best to apply to :

Mulier quædam, nomine Audinga, febris attrita, hæc apud se super recuperanda sibi sanitatem fecisse traditur experimenta. Tres enim candelas unius fecit quantitatis, quarum unam nomine sancti Theoderici, alteram sancti Theodulsi, tertiam sancti Rigoberti constituit : quas simul accendens, quæ superaret ardendo, probare dispositus. Quo facto, dum superdurat flagrando quæ beati fuerat nomine Rigoberti, eidem Sancto fieri votum suum inservit. Continuo aliam instaurans candelam, hujus almi viri duntakat venerationi dicatam, veniensque ad locum designatum, musculum obtulit, et ante quæsita sancti Dei pignera post orationem dormivit, evigilansque desideratam se suspitatem recepisse probavit. Flodoard. Hist. lib. 2. cap. 15.

(h) Id. ibid. lib. 4. cap. 41, 49.

We have already learned of Mr. *Montfaucon*, from whence, in his opinion, those Heathen miracles take their rise: And, much after the same manner as *Diagoras* does, in reference to those votive pictures mentioned by *Cicero*, that represent people saved in storms at sea, the same learned man accounts for their gaining credit in the world: “ Among so many distressed people, some (says he) recovered, and others received no benefit. Of these last no body spoke: Whereas those who had recovered, imputing their having been cured to the favour of *Aesculapius*, did every where talk of their recovery as a miracle: By which means the common delusion was continued and propagated (*i*).” And whether the same reflections are not equally applicable to the Popish miracles, I leave to the judgment of the Reader. For my own particular, I cannot help thinking, that the miracles of Popery are a faithful transcript, or a direct continuation of the miracles of Paganism (*k*). But, as I set out upon this

(*i*) L'affluence du monde aux temples d' *Esculape* étoit grande, les malades y venoient demander la santé, plusieurs y passoient les nuits, & y dormoient pour avoir quelque songe favorable; le desir d'en avoir en amenoit souvent. Apres ces songes, les uns querisoient, les autres n'y trouvoient point de soulagement: de ceux-ci, on n'en parloit plus. Ceux qui querisoient, croioient devoir leur guérison aux songes & à la protection d'*Esculape*, & racontoient par tout leur guérison comme miraculeuse: cela servoit à continuer & à augmenter l' erreur publique. *Montfauc.* *Antiq.* tom. 2. part. 1. Liv. 2. chap. 14.

(*k*) La troisième source d' ou procedent les miracles en Italie, c'est une erreur populaire qui s'y est glissée, & qui a pris présentement de si profondes racines, qu'il est comme impossible de l' extirper: C'est qu'au moindre petit accident qu'il arrive aux Italiens, & la moindre maladie qu' ils ont, ils font un vœu à quelque statuë ou image de la Vierge, ou quelque autre Saint pour en être délivrez. Toutes sortes de mauvaises rencontres ne sont pas fatales à la

this article, so I shall conclude it : In my apprehension, the only miracle upon which the truth or divinity

la vie, & toutes les maladies ne sont pas mortelles ; c'est ce qui fait qu'ils en réchappent fort souvent : mais par une superstition étrange, ou lieu d'en attribuer la gloire à Dieu seul, qui est le Seigneur de la vie & de la mort, ils attribuent le recouvrement de leur santé, ou la delivrance du danger ou ils étoient, aux statués ou images ausquelles ils ont fait vœu. Pour rendre leur reconnaissance plus autentique, suivant la mauvaise coutume qui s'est introduite, ils font faire un tableau ou est représenté ce que leur est arrivé, & eux dans l'acte d'implorer la statuée ou l'image, qui pour cet effect est peinte dans un des coins du tableau, & vers laquelle ils tendent les bras ou les mains jointes, avec ces trois lettres, P. G. R. qui signifient en Italien, *pro Gratia Ricevuta* : *Pour une grace reçue*. On voit en Italie généralement de ces sortes de vœux dans toutes les églises. Il y a toujours la quelque idole miraculeuse qui reçoit les encens, & à laquelle on attache les tables des naufrages. On n'a que faire tapisserie dans ces sortes de chapelles, car tous ces petits tableaux joints l'un à l'autre, couvrent toutes les murailles. On y en voit de toutes sortes de façons. Les uns représentent des gens poursuivis par des assassins ; d'autres qui ont reçu des coups de Poignard, & d'autres battus sur mer par de furieuses tempêtes. Il y en a même de fort scandaleux ; car on y voit des carrossées de Messieurs & de Dames qui renversent les uns sur les autres ; des filles forcées par leurs amans, & des femmes en couche représentées dans leurs lits d'une manière fort lascive & luxurieuse. — Ces tableaux qui ne sont que de simples vœux, ont acquis peu à peu tant de crédit sur les esprits du peuple, qu'ils passent présentement pour de véritables miracles. — De ceci, Monsieur, & de tout ce que je vous ai rapporté ci-dessus sur le fait des miracles, vous pouvez comprendre de quelle force sont ces belles légendes des vies de nouveaux Saints de l'église de Rome ; de quel poids doivent être ces grandes listes de miracles qui les accompagnent, & qui en sont presque toute la substance. Ils ont tous rendu la vue aux aveugles, l'ouïe aux sourds, l'usage de la langue aux muets ; ils ont fait marcher droit les boiteux : Enfin, ils ont préservé de toutes sortes d'accidents, & guéri de toutes sortes de maladies. Mais quand on vient à l'examen de tout cela, tout s'en va en fumée, & tout se réduit, au plus, à quelques petits tableaux, que quelques superstitieux, qui ont cru sans fondement en avoir reçus des grâces, ont fait faire. Hist. des Tromp. des Pretr. tom. 1. p. 253.

vinity of the religion of the old *Romans* was founded, was that intercourse with the goddess *Egeria*, wherein *Numa* pretended to receive his instructions from heaven. And let the Gentleman show us, how far this, or any other miracle in the religion of ancient *Rome*, must diminish our assurance from human testimony, as to the miracles of the Gospel.

But we are further told, that miracles do likewise abound in the religion of *Turkey*. And here again, I am not able to understand, what are the particular miracles of which the Gentleman would here avail himself. I suppose the religion of *Turkey* is contained in the *Alcoran*: And from thence we learn, that when it was objected to *Mahomet*, that he wrought no miracles, he denies not the charge, but goes about to justify himself by several reasons, and comes at length to tell the world, that the miracles of *Moses* and of *Jesus* having proved ineffectual, God had now sent him, in the last place, without miracles, to persuade the world, by the power of the sword, to submit themselves to the authority of heaven. So that the religion of *Turkey*, contained in the *Alcoran*, can furnish the Gentleman with no miracles that can come in competition with those of the Gospel. No doubt, *Mahomet* assures us, that, by the hands of the Angel *Gabriel*, he had received his *Alcoran* from God; and that, under the direction of that Angel, he one night made a journey to the highest heavens. But pretensions of this nature are not, I apprehend, quite so well fitted to the Gentleman's purpose. Nor is it to be denied, that some fabulous and legendary Writers ascribe several miracles to this Impostor, such as "his cleaving the moon in two," "and his being told by a shoulder of mutton of its being poisoned." But whatever passion the Gentleman may have to serve himself of such miracles,

racles, he must know, they are all disclaimed by the learned Doctors of that religion ; and *Mahomet* himself, as I have just now hinted, scruples not to own, in several places of his *Alcoran*, that he wrought no miracles (*1*). I am therefore, I say, at a loss to understand, what miracles, in the religion of *Turkey*, the Gentleman would here oppose to those of the Gospel. And, till he shall be pleased to declare himself upon this, and the other articles, I must in the mean while observe, that the credit of the Gospel miracles can suffer nothing from that infinite number of miracles, which, we are told, are every where to be found in the other religions of the world.

Whether the Gentleman, after having thrown out those general reflections, now means to give us a specimen of the proof, whereby, he would insinuate, some, at least, of that infinite number of miracles, so conspicuous in those other religions, are supported, I will not take upon me to affirm. But he comes to particulars, and assures us, that “ one of the best attested miracles in all “ profane history, is that which *Tacitus* reports of “ *Vespasian*, who cured a blind man in *Alexandria*,

“ by

(*1*) *Jésus Christ* a fait plusieurs de ses miracles à la face du ciel & de la terre——C'est ce qu'on ne peut pas dire de *Mahomed* ; il se fâche dans son *Alcoran* des signes & des prodiges ; il en a fait, nous dit-on, dans son enfance & dans sa jeunesse, c'est à-dire, lors qu'il n'en étoit pas besoin ; mais il n'en fait plus dans le cours de son ministère, lorsqu'il eût été fort nécessaire qu'il en eût fait. *La Relig. des Mahomet.* Tiré du Lat. de M. Reland. p. lxxii.

Il n'y a donc nulle apparence, conclut M. Reland, que la conte du pigeon puisse être rehabilité. Car si ce fait avoit quelque fondement dans l'histoire, ou même la tradition, les auteurs Arabes n'auroient pas manqué de la joindre, comme miraculeux, à tant d'autres, qui n'ont pas la moindre ombre de vraisemblance, comme, par exemple, que la lune soit descendue du ciel pour le saluer, que les arbres soient venus lui faire la réverence, que les bêtes mêmes lui aient fait hommage, &c. *Ibid.* 267.

“ by means of his spittle, and a lame man by the
“ mere touch of his foot, in obedience to a vision
“ of the god *Serapis*, who had enjoined them to
“ have recourse to the Emperor for those miracu-
“ lous and extraordinary cures. And, all circum-
“ stances duly considered, it will appear, that no
“ evidence can well be supposed stronger for so gross
“ and palpable a falsehood (*m*).” Possibly, indeed,
no stronger evidence can be brought for so gross a
falshood. And this being one of the best attested
miracles in all profane history, and yet a gross falsehood,
one can have no difficulty in pronouncing all
other miracles attended with less evidence downright
forgery. But I am afraid, it is here meant, that
for the truth of the miracles of the Gospel, we have
no stronger evidence, than we have for the truth of
those miracles that are said to have been wrought
by *Vespasian*; and consequently, that their credit
being no better, they can deserve no better or higher
rank in the esteem of mankind. And, as I take
this to be Gentleman’s opinion, I must own he has
done well to let us know, what is that particular e-
vidence that attends *Vespasian*’s miracles. “ The
“ story (says he) may be seen in *Tacitus*; where
“ every circumstance seems to add weight to the
“ testimony, and might be displayed at large with
“ all the force of argument and eloquence.” Upon
which having hinted several topics of persuasion,
he concludes, that “ no evidence can well be sup-
“ posed stronger.” But I could have wished that
among those topics he had condescended to display
some small portion of his eloquence, in setting forth
the nature and perfections of the god *Serapis*, with
whose divinity the world now is not quite so well
acquainted; and in explaining the reasons or mo-
tives

(*m*) P. 192, 193.

tives that might have induced this god to work miracles. For, as I have laid it down in the beginning of this argument, I hold it for a firm principle and rule, that it is the distinct and certain knowledge of the author, and intention of the miracles wrought, whereby alone we can judge of their importance, or whether they ought to be regarded as divine operations. And what need there is of all the force of the Gentleman's argument and eloquence, in order to bring the miracles of *Serapis* to bear the face of a competition with those of the Gospel, one may learn from the account which *Tacitus* gives us of this deity. In short, he tells us,

" That *Serapis*, not quite so well satisfied, it would seem, with his situation at *Sinope*, appeared in a vision to *Ptolemy*, and admonished him to have his image transported from thence to *Alexandria*: But that *Ptolemy* not being forward enough in his obedience, he found it necessary to appear to him a second time, and with a threatening aspect to renew his commands: That upon this *Ptolemy* sent off some ships with an embassy and presents: But that the people of *Sinope* refusing to part with their god, *Serapis* appeared to their King *Scydrathemis*, and not only threatened him, but, whilst he delayed, afflicted him with several distempers and calamities: In fine, that the people continuing still obstinate in their refusal, the god impatient of longer delay, his image of itself went on board the ships; and on the third day (a wonderful passage over so long a tract of sea) landed at *Alexandria*, where a magnificent temple was built for its service (n)."

This is the god whose miracles our Infidels would now have to balance the miracles of the blessed *Jesus*.

(n) *Tacit. Hist. lib. 4. 83, 84.*

sus. I confess, that without considering the nature and perfections of the god *Serapis*, and the end intended by his working miracles, the Gentleman is pleased to assure us, that no matters of fact can be justified by stronger evidence. Upon this, therefore, I would presume to ask, as he can be here in no fright of their being made the foundation of a system of religion, what hinders the Gentleman from believing the truth of those miracles? He acknowledges, there is here all the evidence that can arise from the nature and circumstances of such matters of fact, and that no evidence can well be supposed stronger: And one should think, he is therefore bound, in reason, to yield to this evidence, or to admit the truth of those facts that are thus supported by the strongest evidence. Nor can the Gentleman justify his rejecting those matters of fact as gross and palpable falsehoods, because they are miraculous events above the efficiency of the laws of nature. For this, manifestly, is either the setting up his own notions as the measure and standard of truth, or the making the thing a reason against itself, which, where the thing in itself is possible, is consistent with no principle of good sense, and can be made good by no man whatsoever. So that if the Gentleman has no other objection to the miracles of *Vespasian*, but that they are miracles, and otherwise allows them to be supported by an evidence, than which no evidence can well be supposed stronger; this is all we pretend to shew or claim for the miracles of the Gospel, an evidence, the strongest that the nature of things can afford us: And upon this, we apprehend, the reality of their existence is demonstrated. Only it is to be observed, that although the admitting the miracles of *Vespasian*, can do no prejudice to the miracles of the Gospel,

or

or in any measure lessen their authority, nevertheless the comparison must be held infinitely ridiculous.

After all, I violently suspect, that those miracles ascribed to *Vespasian*, (in the intention of the Actor, altogether useless and unmeaning as to any thing of religion, and of no sort of consequence to mankind) have nothing in them supernatural or miraculous. Nor was the Emperor himself conscious of any power or virtue capable of effecting such events. On the contrary, he derides the notion : — Being importuned — he is diffident and wavering, — he grows into confidence from the arguments of his flatterers. At what an immense distance is this case from that of our Lord and his Apostles ! The plain history is this : Whilst *Vespasian* was at *Alexandria*, being extremely intent upon the raising of money, and the procuring of corn to be sent to *Rome*, so rapacious was he in his exactions, that he spared no rank or order of men, nor did he regard whether things were sacred or profane. This brought upon him the hatred of the *Alexandrians*. And in those circumstances, one may easily imagine, the Priests of *Serapis* being greatly alarmed, failed not to employ all their craft, and to use their best endeavours to secure themselves, or to prevent that oppression to which they were exposed. Now, so it happened, that, during *Vespasian's* stay in that city ; “ A certain man of *Alexandria* (as Mr. *Gordon* translates the passage) one of the commonalty, noted for want of sight, prostrating himself at his feet, implored a cure for his blindness, by premonition from *Serapis*, the god whom that nation, devoted to superstition, adores beyond all others. He besought the Emperor, That with his spittle he would condescend to wash his cheeks, and the balls of his eyes. Another, lame in his hand, at the direction

" of the same god, prayed him to tread upon it.
 " *Vespasian*, at first, derided and refused them. As
 " they continued importunate, he wavered : Now,
 " he feared the character and imputation of vanity,
 " anon, was drawn into hopes, through the in-
 " treaties of the supplicants, and the arguments of
 " flatterers. At last, he ordered the Physicians to
 " examine, whether such blindness and such lame-
 " ness were curable by human aid. The Physicians
 " reasoned doubtfully : *In this man the power of*
 " *sight was not wholly extinct, and would return were*
 " *the obstacles removed.* The other man's joyns were
 " distorted, and might be restored with regular pressing
 " and straining. To the gods, perhaps, the cure was
 " well pleasing, and by them the Emperor was ordained
 " the divine instrument to accomplish it. To conclude,
 " from the success of the remedy, the glory would accrue
 " to the Prince. If it failed, the wretches themselves
 " must bear the derision. *Vespasian* therefore con-
 " ceiving that within the reach of his fortune all
 " things lay, and that nothing was any longer in-
 " credible, performed the task with a chearful coun-
 " tenance, before a multitude intent upon the issue.
 " Instantly the lame hand recovered full strength,
 " and upon the eyes of the blind light broke in.
 " Both events, those who were present continue e-
 " ven now to recount, when, from testification, any
 " gain is no longer to be hoped. Hence *Vespasian*
 " was seized with a passion more profound for visiting
 " the residence of the deity, to consult him about the
 " state and fortune of the empire (o)." And

Thus the Priests of *Serapis*, and the revenues of
 their temple came to be in great safety ; and, instead

(o) Tacit. Hist. lib. iv. cap. 81. Vid. Xiphilin. in Vitell. et
Vespasian. Suetonius differs from Tacitus, and reports, that the
 man was lame in his leg.

stead of lying exposed to rigorous exactions, were in a fair way of gaining new acquisitions. And I doubt not but *Vespasian* left them greatly enriched with his presents : For, as the event mightily raised his reputation, deriving to him a certain air of divinity, or shewing him a particular favourite of the gods, it could not but prove highly acceptable. So that, from all the circumstances of the story, one is led to apprehend, that those two men, who insisted with so much importunity in beseeching *Vespasian* to cure them, and even directed him after what particular manner he might perform the cure, both of the one and of the other, were downright cheats, and only acted a part, (which neither *Vespasian* nor those about him, might be aware of) by the contrivance of the Priests of *Serapis*. And how can one judge otherwise, when one considers, that the god *Serapis* was no more in those days, than he is now, a mere nothing ; and therefore could appear to no man in a vision ? At the same time one may suspect it was not, perhaps, unworthy of the foresight of the Emperor himself to bring about those events, as in a competition for the empire, they might prove of considerable consequence. But whatever those miracles be, true or false, it matters not. It is impossible they can, at any rate, affect the miracles of the Gospel, so as in the least to diminish their authority. Beyond all question, every matter of fact, independent in itself, must be attended with its own proper evidence, upon which alone its authority is grounded.

As to those other miracles, referred to by the Gentleman, so frequent in the church of *Rome* : A most melancholy circumstance it is, that any man has it in his power to make such objections to the miracles of the Gospel. It is well known what desolation

solation and ruin was, by the follies and wickedness of mankind, brought upon the religion of nature. And now the same infamous passions prevailing in the church of *Rome*, have, in like manner, laid waste the religion of *Jesus*. The charge, therefore, of the Apostle against the Heathen world, is too too applicable to that church, who have perverted the Gospel into an engine of state, or a mere system of worldly policy. *They hold the truth in unrighteousness*: Amidst their unrighteous tenets and practices, they have quite confounded and overwhelmed the truths of the Gospel, and cannot therefore but lie obnoxious to the judgments of God. *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them*; for God, in the Gospel of his Son, hath shewed it unto them. *So that they are without excuse*: *Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God*, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man. They have changed the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. And in such a church, there may, indeed, be abundance of lying wonders, of fraud and imposture; but how can one expect miracles, those supernatural interpositions of Providence? It is from a virtue peculiar to the institution of the Gospel, that the church of *Rome* pretend to have miracles wrought among them: And to continue those pretensions, whilst the institution upon which they ground them, is, by their mixtures, so far depraved and adulterated, that it is any thing but the Gospel of *Christ*, seems altogether absurd and inconsistent. But, besides this strong presumption, in general, against the miracles of

of the church of *Rome*, certain it is, that the more prudent and learned of that communion do generally look upon them as pious frauds to raise and entertain the devotion of the weak and ignorant. In which light Cardinal *de Retz*, who could not but know their tricks, did undoubtedly consider that miracle he mentions at *Saragossa*; but which the Spanish Inquisition would have made it dangerous for any man to have declared. And, as in numberless instances, their forgeries have been detected; so some of their learned men have had the honesty and courage to publish the truth, and, in some particulars, to expose the knavery of their Priests. In short, the nature of their miracles, or the circumstances that attend them, or the end and purpose they are meant to serve, are so extravagant, or so foolish and absurd, so unworthy of God, and so repugnant to the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, that no confederate man can prevail with himself to regard them. And therefore, as the knavery and credulity, the frauds, the ignorance, and superstition prevailing in the church of *Rome*, are so very notorious, no man, who would govern his judgment by the real truth of things, can, from the pretended miracles of that church, be tempted to suspect, or to call into question the miracles of the Gospel.

These general reflections may here seem to be sufficient, especially as I have, in some sort, pointed out the conformity of the Popish ceremonies and miracles with those of the Heathen (p.). But it may

(p) Dr. Middleton, in his letter from *Rome*, has, in my apprehension, done good service to the religion of the blessed *Jesus*, whilst he there clearly explains the source of most of the Popish idolatry and superstition, and strongly represents them to the senses of mankind. And, as such arguments are apt to make a deeper

not be amiss to observe further ; there is hardly any thing miraculous among the Heathen, how absurd soever,

deeper impression on human minds, than can arise from abstract reasoning, I shall here transcribe some remarks of the Abbot de Marolles upon Ovid's Faft, that seem to answer the same purpose. It would, perhaps, be tedious to mention all the particulars which the Abbot takes notice of. And therefore, passing by his observations concerning holy-days, the sacred fire, incense, holy water, processions, prayers and offerings for the dead, &c. I shall write out, as a specimen, only those passages that relate to their offerings and prayers to Saints and images, their miraculous images, their canonizations, and their Purgatory. And I chuse to refer to this piece of Abbé de Marolles, not only because the Author is of the church of Rome, but because the Reader, who has any curiosity in such matters, may satisfy himself without the trouble of turning over many books, and, at the same time, have an immediate view of the sources themselves.

With respect to Offerings and Prayers to Saints and Images.

Licia dependent longas velantia sepes,
Et posita est meritæ multa tabella deæ.

Ovid. Faft. lib. iii. ver. 268.

" These (says M. de Marolles) are the offerings of Hunters, which had been vowed to Diana. For nothing is more common among the Antients, than vows hung up in temples, and round the sacred places. And here the Poet tells us, that in this temple there are many inscriptions upon tables, in honour of the goddess,

" Et posita est meritæ multa tabella deæ.

" In short, there is a number of such antient inscriptions collected together in books ; some for having been delivered from perils at sea, others for having been cured of a dangerous disease, or for having recovered one's sight when blind, or one's hearing when deaf, &c. Pro redditis fibi luminibus gratias agit, ex viso, pro se et Capia Maxima conjugè, et Julia Frontina filia, Caius Julius Frontinianus. And says Tibullus :

Nunc dea, nunc succurre mihi ; nam posse mederi
Pieta docet templis multa tabella tuis.

" And

soever, of which the church of *Rome* do not seem to have been fond of imitating. One would think it

" And does not all this mightily correspond with what is at this day practised ?

Sæpe deos aliquis peccando fecit iniquos :
Et pro delictis hostia blanda fuit.
Sæpe Jovem vidi, cum jam sua mittere vellet
Fulmina, thure dato, sustinuisse manum.

Lib. v. ver. 299.

" It is for the self-same reason that people make so many offerings to Saints ; and that they are persuaded, that pilgrimages, candles, vows, and nine-days-devotions, have so much efficacy. Nor do I herein incline to blame their intention, or to condemn a custom, which Princes and Prelates authorise by their example."

The institution of a Nine-days-devotion (*Novendiale sacrum*) among the Heathen (still prevailing in the church of *Rome*) came, as some people thought, immediately from heaven. It was observed particularly, when it rained stones ; which happened frequently. *Seu voce cœlesti ex Albano monte missa (nam id quoque traditur) seu Aruspicū monitu, mansit certe solenne, ut quandoquaque idem prodigium nunciaretur, feriæ per novem dies agerentur.* Liv. lib. i. § 31.

Solemni satis est voce movere preces.

Lib. vi. ver. 622.

" These solemn prayers were put up to *Servius Tullius* at his tomb, or rather his image in the temple of Fortune. Whence it appears, that he was esteemed a Saint, or a god, as the Antients spoke : For what is Saint with us, was with them divine or a god. And, after this example, we, to this day, give the name of *Divi* (gods) to our Saints."

With respect to Miraculous Images.

Creditur armiferæ signum cœleste Minervæ

Urbis in Iliacæ desiluisse juga. Ibid. ver. 421.

" Among us, they tell the like stories of images come down from heaven, whereof the number is pretty considerable.

" And

it abundantly extravagant, to represent any of mankind whispering brute creatures, or entering into conversation

“ And of the truth of this so confident are some people, that they
“ would bring a man into great danger, should he go about to
“ disabuse them.”

Signum erat in folio residens sub imagine Tulli :

Dicitur hoc oculis opposuisse manū.

Et vox audita est, vultus abscondite nostros,

Ne natae videant ora nefanda meæ.

Velle data tegitur : Vetat hanc Fortuna moveri :

Et sic e templo est ipsa locuta suo :

Ore revelato quâ primum luce patebit

Servius, hæc positi prima pudoris erit.

Parcite, matronæ, vetitos attingere vestes ;

Solemni satis est voce movere preces :

Sitque caput semper Romano tectus amictu,

Qui Rex in nostra septimus urbe fuit.

Arserat hoc templum : Signo tamen ille pepercit

Ignis. —————

Ibid. ver. 613.

“ This image (which lifted up its hands before its face, and uttered these words, Cover my eyes that they may not behold the execrable face of my daughter) was not of stone, nor of marble, but of wood. So that its preservation amidst the flames, was counted, among the Antients, a kind of miracle. And indeed such an event among us, would easily pass for a miracle ; where people are of opinion, that something of divinity resides in certain images, wherein particularly, they are well assured, God himself, the Virgin, and the Saints, like to be honoured. The histories of miraculous images at Rome, and at Loretto, all over Italy, and in other places, are without number. They reckon likewise, that in the burning of a chapel, where Romulus's rod was kept, this rod was the only thing on which the flames did not seize.”

Here likewise Ovid, we see, tells us, that the goddess Fortune commanded that the image of Servius should be kept always veiled. And in the church of Rome, there is an incredible number of veiled images, which, at certain periodical times, or upon some extraordinary occasions, they unveil with great pomp and solemnity ; whereby the devotion of the people is mightily revived, and the profits of the Priests greatly increased. VId. Tromp. des Prêtr. tom. ii. p. 157, &c.

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conversation with them, and making them swear, or bringing them under solemn engagements, that, af-

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They have too at Dijon a miraculous crucifix, which is said to have expressed itself after this manner: " Cover me, that I may not see the iniquities of my people; and let never any man presume to uncover me." But this prohibition notwithstanding, one of their Priors came to have the boldness to uncover it: And the circumstances of this audacious attempt are abundantly entertaining. *Ibid. tom. i. p. 27.*

With respect to the Canonization of Saints.

Nuper erat dea facta. —

Lib. iii. ver. 677.

" In those days they made gods and goddesses, whom they placed in their Kalendar; as we now a-days can make Saints, both male and female. With respect to merit, however, there is no comparison. Mean while, 'tis from the language of the Antients, that we sometimes in Latin call the blessed faithful, *Divi et Diæ* (gods and goddesses). For in common language we content ourselves with giving them the title of Saints. Nor because we have a number of things from Paganism, from which God, in his pure mercy, hath been pleased to deliver us, are the Just, therefore, and the Faithful the less just or the less faithful. God hath sanctified those usages and customs that were formerly profane."

With respect to Purgatory.

Inque foco corpus pueri vivente favilla
Obruit, humanum purget ut ignis onus.

" Observe this purgation by fire. This passage greatly resembles what we have lately read in Seneca the Tragedian.— Quicquid in nobis tui mortale fuerat ignis injectus tulit. And does not this likewise bear the image of our Purgatory?"

But a far more striking image of Purgatory we have from Plato in his Phæd. where we likewise find the doctrine of venial and mortal sins: πολὺ δὲ πῦρ, καὶ πυρὸς μεγάλως ποταμὸς.—

— καὶ ἔκει τέ, καὶ καθαρόμενοι, καὶ τῶν τε ἀδικημάτων
εἰσόρτες

ter such a particular manner they will not fail to form their future conduct. This, however, is said to have happened in the case of *Pythagoras*, who meeting a *Daunian* bear, which had done great mischief to the inhabitants, came to prevail with the savage beast to make oath, that, for the future, she would not touch a living creature (*q*). And, after the same manner, when St. *Francis*, the founder of the *Franciscan* Order, came to the town of *Eugubium*, being informed that a wolf from the neighbourhood was very destructive to their cattle, the good Saint undertakes to deliver them; and finding out the wolf, after some conversation, he engages the ravenous creature to promise, upon honourable terms, that he would do no further harm to the cattle of that place (*r*). Thus the wonders wrought by the Popish Saint and the Heathen Philosopher are pretty equal and similar. But I am afraid there are other instances, of worse consequence, wherein it may be said,

*Θιδόντες δίκαζες ἀπολύνοντας. — — οἱ δὲ ἀνδρῶν ἀνάτης
τέχειν, διὰ τὰ μεγέθη ἀμαρτημάτων, — — τέττας δὲ οὐ προσή-
κυστα μοῖρα ρίψει ἐις τὸν Τάρταρον, ὅπερ ἔποτε ἐκβάινεσσιν.*
In another world there is much fire, and mighty rivers of fire. There departed souls have their abode, till being purified, and having suffered the punishment of their sins, they are discharged. But those who are incurable, because of the hainousness of their crimes, are cast into Tartarus, from whence they never are delivered. Vid. Virg. *Æn.* vi. ver. 735.

(*q*) *Εἰ δὲ δεῖ πισένειν τοὺς ἰσορπαστούς περὶ ἀυτῷ, παλαιοῖς
δὲ οὐδὲ ἀξιολόγοις, μέχρι καὶ τῶν ἀλόγων ζώων δικηνέτο ἀυτῷ
οὐ πεδέντοις. τὴν μὲν γὰρ Δαυνίαν ἄρκτον λυμανομένην τὸς
ἐνόικος καταχώρ, ὡς φασι, καὶ ἐπαφοσάμενος χρόνον συχνὸν,
ψωμίσας τε μάζῃ καὶ ἀκροδρύοις, ὄρκώσας τε μηκέτι ἐισψύχε
ἔφαπτεσθαι, ἀπέλυσεν οὐ δὲ εὐθὺς ἐις τὰ ὅρη καὶ τὰς δρυμίας
ἀπαλλαγεῖσα, ἕκετέρη ὥφθη παράπαντας ἐπιώντα καὶ ἀλόγῳ ζῷῳ.*
Porph. de vit. Pythag. § 23, 24.

(*r*) Geddes's View of all the Orders of Monks, &c. p. 54.

said, Popish Priests have imitated Heathen Priests. The learned *Montfaucon* apprehends, that the Heathen were wont to suborn persons to counterfeit diseases, that upon addressing themselves for relief to their deities, the cure might appear miraculous. And Mr. *D'Emiliane* assures us, that in the church of *Rome*, some poor people have the patience for five or six years to feign themselves lame, paralytic, or blind, that upon their applying for deliverance to some Saint, or to some image of the *Virgin*, they may give occasion to a miracle; which they find very beneficial, and to afford them good subsistence; and wherein the Priests, when it happens likewise to serve their interest, do not fail to encourage them (s). And are those the miracles, which the Gentleman would put in balance against the miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles? Mr. *D'Emiliane*, whom I have frequently referred to, was a secular Priest in *France*. He left the Popish church, and turned Protestant. With great moderation he has, in some letters, given us a history of the frauds
of

(s) La seconde cause des miracles est la ruse de certains gueux. — Il y en a qui ont la patience de contrefaire les boiteux, paralitiques, ou aveugles, cinq ou six ans durant, pour aller faire ensuite un miracle dans quelque église, attribuant leur deliverance à quelque image de la Vierge, ou à quelque Saint. Le profit qui leur revient de cela, est que le peuple étant informé du miracle qui leur est arrivé, les croit être de fort bonnes personnes, & de grands amis de Dieu, puisqu'ils en ont reçu des faveurs si signalées. C'est ce qui pousse les gens à leur faire de bonnes aumônes, pour avoir part à leurs prières. Quelques personnes riches & dévotes en prennent même fort souvent le soin, & font qu'il ne leur manque rien tout le reste de leur vie. Les Prêtres & les Moines leur donnent aussi leur entretien, lorsqu'ils ont donné du crédit à quelqu'une de leurs chapelles, & qu'il en revient un profit considérable. On m'a montré plusieurs de ces pauvres là dans les convens, qui vivent présentement parmi les domestiques fort à leur aise, & sans rien faire. *Tromp. des Prêtr. tom. i. p. 252.*

of the Priests and Monks of that communion. What he relates is from his own knowledge, and from him we learn what kind of miracles prevail in the church of *Rome*: How people, from their earliest infancy, are trained up in the belief of them: How dangerous it is to deny them, or, in any degree, to call them into question: And that they are all mere imposture. Of those miracles he gives many particular instances. And I could almost presume to recommend this Gentleman's book to those, who would like to read a dispassionate account of some of the practices of the *Roman* church.

There is one presumption more, whereby the Gentleman would prejudice the world against the Gospel-miracles. "In the infancy (says he) of new religions, the wise and learned commonly esteem the matter too inconsiderable to deserve their attention or regard: And when afterwards they would willingly detect the cheat, in order to undeceive the deluded multitude, the season is now gone, and the records and witnesses, who might clear up the matter, have perished beyond recovery. No means of detection remain, but those which must be drawn from the very testimony itself of the Reporters: And these, though always sufficient with the judicious and knowing, are commonly too fine to fall under the comprehension of the vulgar (1)." No doubt, the Gentleman is fully master of the Gospel-history; and cannot therefore but be fully sensible, that, in the infancy of the Christian religion, things were quite otherwise than he would here represent them. And as it appears from the history itself, so, in the course of our argument, I shall have occasion to explain, that the wise and learned among the Jews did by no

(1) P. 198.

no means esteem the matter too inconsiderable to deserve their attention and regard ; but that, greatly alarmed, they, for several years, and with the keenest passions, inquired into the miracles of *Jesus*, and eagerly went about to suppress his religion upon its first appearance, and obstinately persisted in using all possible means to prevent its gaining credit in the world.

Thus far, I hope, it is manifest, that the presumptions offered by the Gentleman, against the certainty of the Gospel-miracles, are of no moment, and can never render those miracles of a doubtful or suspected credit, or, in any measure, abate our assurance as to the reality of their existence. But the objection that comes directly to the purpose, and upon the strength of which the whole cause of Infidelity depends, is this :

“ No testimony (says he) is sufficient to establish
“ a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind,
“ that its falsehood would be more miraculous than
“ the fact which it endeavours to establish.—This
“ indeed supposes, that the testimony upon which a
“ miracle is founded may possibly amount to an in-
“ tire proof, and that the falsehood of that testi-
“ mony would be a kind of prodigy. But, 'tis
“ easy to shew, that we have been a great deal too
“ liberal in our concessions, and that there never
“ was a miraculous event, in any history, establish-
“ ed on so full an evidence.

“ For there is not to be found, in all history, any
“ miracle attested by a sufficient number of men, of
“ such unquestioned good sense, education, and
“ learning, as to secure us against all delusion in
“ themselves; of such undoubted integrity, as to
“ place them beyond all suspicion of any design to
“ deceive

"deceive others ; of such credit and reputation in
"the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to
"lose in case of being detected in any falsehood ;
"and, at the same time, attesting facts, performed
"in such a public manner, and in so celebrated a
"part of the world, as to render the detection un-
"avoidable : All which circumstances are requisite
"to give us a full assurance in the testimony of
"men (x)." In these circumstances, therefore, by
the Gentleman's own confession, the falsehood of a
man's testimony would be a kind of prodigy, and
more miraculous than the miracle which he relates.
And in this case, he rightly judges, the Relator may
pretend to command our belief. But such a case,
he assures us, never happened.

This, I say, is the objection, in the truth of
which lies the whole stress of the cause the Gentle-
man defends. And, as he has here suggested the
principles of moral evidence, or laid down a sure and
wide foundation, upon which human testimony, with
respect to matters of religion, may rest secure, and
stand firm and unshaken, I likewise most willingly
appeal to the same principles, and submit the cause
to their decision. In opposition, therefore, to this
objection, I take upon me to affirm :

There is to be found, in the history of the Go-
spel, a long continued series of miracles, attested by
a sufficient number of men, of such unquestioned
good sense, education, and learning, as to secure us
against all delusion in themselves ; of such undoubted
integrity as to place them beyond all suspicion of
any design to deceive others ; of such credit and re-
putation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great
deal to lose in case of being detected in any falsehood ;
and, at the same time, attesting facts, performed in
such a public manner, and in so celebrated a part of
the

the world, as to render the detection unavoidable. All this, I say, I take upon me to affirm: And all this, I hope, the Reader will come to find clearly made out in the following argument. Only, as this argument was composed many years before the publication of the Gentleman's *Essays*, and now comes abroad without any alteration, it cannot well be expected, that one shall find those articles regularly explained in the same order, wherein they are here set down from the objection. But I am in good hopes, that the judicious Reader will find them demonstrated, one or other of them, in almost every branch of the reasoning. Nor are those silly cavils, which some expressions in the objection (*education, learning, credit, and reputation in the eyes of mankind*) seem to portend, at all to be regarded. And if herein I injure the Gentleman, he is at liberty to bring them forth, and let the world judge of their importance.

After having given out his *objections* and *presumptions* against miracles, with a particular eye to those of the Gospel, the Gentleman seems to bethink himself, and would inform the world, after what manner, or from what particular motives, the first Publishers of the Christian revelation (as the miracles they pretend to are all forgery) came to be engaged and supported in their arduous undertaking. And upon this, he is pleased to offer us these reflections, and to recommend them, in the case of the Apostles, by his bare authority. "The wise (says "he) lend a very academic faith to every report "which favours the passions of the Reporter, whe- "ther it magnifies his country, his family or him- "self, or in any other way strikes in with his na- "tural inclinations and propensities. But what "greater temptation than to appear a Missionary, a
"Prophet,

" Prophet, an Ambassador from Heaven? Who would not encounter many dangers and difficulties to attain so sublime a character? Or if, by the help of vanity and a heated imagination, a man has first made a convert of himself, and entered seriously into the delusion; whoever scruples to make use of pious frauds, in support of so holy and meritorious a cause (y)??" Here, I say, the Gentleman would have the world to take his word, and to rest assured, that either vain-glory or enthusiasm was the great spring of action in the first Publishers of the Gospel; and that in carrying on their design, they scrupled not to make use of pious frauds, or to forge miracles. But how very groundless the accusation is, the following argument will, I flatter myself, clearly demonstrate.

And, I hope too, it will there evidently appear, that the falsehood of the testimony of the Apostles, would be more miraculous, if I may speak so, than any miracle they relate; or it would be a kind of prodigy, whose existence among mankind is simply impossible: For as the Apostles in their testimony could not possibly become guilty of falsehood, without suspending or altering the most essential principles of human nature; and as those principles, the very same with that of self-preservation, are absolutely unalterable, and can be suspended by no Being whatsoever: So the falsehood of their testimony, being directly opposite to those principles, wholly destructive of their very being, cannot but be held an event altogether impossible; or, if one may express it in the Gentleman's dialect, would be counted infinitely more miraculous, than any of those miracles reported in the Gospel; for the effecting of which, nothing more is necessary but the suspending
or

or altering of the arbitrary laws of nature. This, I say, is what I hope will be made appear in the following argument. And it is that which the Gentleman confesses may pretend to command his belief. But this notwithstanding, I must have leave to think, that the making it a necessary quality in the attestation of a miracle, that the falsehood of the testimony shall be more miraculous than the miracle itself (z); or, to speak intelligibly, shall infer a sus-

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pension

(z) When people talk of an event as miraculous, it is to be understood, that in the nature of things, that event is possible, or capable of being effected. As therefore I cannot suppose the testimony of the Apostles, concerning the miracles of Jesus, to be false, without supposing an event, not miraculous, but impossible, or that therein the most essential principles and laws, whereby human minds, in all circumstances, are absolutely governed, must have been suspended or altered; it is plain, that in the case of the Apostles, the Gentleman's demand is absurd and impertinent. Nor am I able to conceive any event, wherein it can possibly happen, that the falsehood of the testimony would prove miraculous. No doubt, there are principles or laws of the moral world, as well as of the material world, which, in some instances, may be suspended or altered: Thus a man's Fore-sight may be extended beyond the limits of human understanding, and apprehend things that lie hid in futurity, which we call Prophesy: Thus likewise, a man's Knowledge may be enlarged, or his mind may be opened, all of a sudden, to perceive things highly valuable, which he was not able to have known of himself, or which he could not have known without a tedious discipline, or long study and application: And thus again a man's Affections and dispositions, his inward springs of action, obstinately, or perhaps by long habit, irresistibly bent to idolatry and superstition, to impiety and wickedness, may be changed suddenly, and the man become forthwith rational in his religion, and universally pious and virtuous. In such instances, I say, the laws of the moral world may be suspended or altered; and in all such instances one has the notion of something possible, and which may justly be termed Miraculous. But, in any instance, to form the notion of a false attestation, which can appear, or with any sort of propriety can be called miraculous, is not, I confess, within the reach of my imagination. So that the Gentleman's gene-

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pension or alteration of the essential immutable laws of human nature, an event absolutely impossible, is going beyond the bounds of reason, and laying down a condition that is demanded by none of the principles of moral evidence.

I shall conclude with answering a question gravely propounded by the Gentleman : “ Is the consequence “ just (says he) because some human testimony has “ the utmost force and authority in some cases, “ when it relates the battles of *Philippi* or *Pharsalia*, “ for instance, that therefore all kinds of testimo-“ ny must, in all cases, have equal force and autho-“ rity (a) ? ” No, by no means. But, where the testimony is supported by an evidence equal to that which procures credit to the battles of *Pharsalia* and *Philippi*, I hope it deserves equally to be regarded. And the Gentleman will give me leave to say, that, in my apprehension, the testimony of the Apostles, in relation to the matters of fact reported in the Gospel, is supported by an evidence incomparably stronger: So that leaving this Forger of new arguments in the peaceable possession of that odd grotesque figure, in which, pretending to be very witty, at the end of his *Essay of Miracles*, he chuses to entertain his Reader, and to offer himself to the contempt or the derision of the Public, or rather to the pity of all good men; I shall only add, I am apt to think, it will do the Gentleman no disservice to bestow a thought or two upon this little Anecdote :

“ Some

ral criterion, whereby he would have us judge of the truth of miracles, namely, that “ the falsehood of the testimony must be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish,” is, in my apprehension, void of all sense and meaning, more contemptible than his opinion concerning miracles, which, how ever absurd, is nevertheless intelligible.

(a) P. 196.

" Some *Clazomenians*, who happened to be at
" *Sparta*, had the insolence to do over with foot
" the public benches of the Judges; upon which
" the *Ephori*, not in the least discomposed, caused
" this public proclamation to be made, 'Εξισω Κλαζο-
" μενίοις αχημονεῖ, *The Clazomenians have leave to*
" *act unhandsomely, and below the character of Gen-*
" *tlemen (b).*'"

Upon the whole, it is apparent, that as a miracle is an event in itself credible, and a proper object of human belief; and that no objection against its existence can be drawn from the nature of the fact, or from the common experience of mankind: So the Gentleman's presumptions against the truth of miracles, whereby he would infringe the credit of the miracles of the Gospel, are of no moment, and can in no degree impair the authority of those miracles, or induce us in the least to suspect the reality of their existence.

Our way, therefore, being thus far, I would fain think, sufficiently cleared; or having made it manifest, that one may safely appeal to the writings of the New Testament as authentic history, to which no reasonable exception can be taken; I shall now proceed to our main argument. *And may the Father of lights, the great Parent of mankind, in whose bands are the spirits of all living, graciously open our minds to perceive the truth, and effectually dispose our hearts to embrace it.*

(b) *Aelian. Var. Hist. lib. 2. cap. 15.*

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position a result of his own self-delusion and his
desire to prove himself a better man than his wife,
so his feelings upon his son's return are reflected
in the attitude he takes towards the new member of the family.
He is at first inclined to resent the intrusion of such
a man into his home, but as he begins to know him
and to appreciate his qualities he becomes more
and more fond of him. The boy's mother, too,
is greatly pleased by the boy's return, and it is
she who is instrumental in bringing about the
boy's reconciliation with his father.

mit blauem Fäden auf und verbindet sie mit
einem zentralen Knochen, der die Achse bildet.
Die Achse ist von einer Reihe von sechs
Knochen umgeben, die sich in Form eines Kreises
um die Achse drehen. Diese Knochen sind
ausgestattet mit kleinen Zähnen, die die Achse
schützen. Die Achse selbst ist aus einem
harten Material hergestellt, wahrscheinlich
aus Eisen oder Stahl.

